BREAKING THE CYCLE: SUBSTANCE USE

PREVENTING FAMILY TRANSMISSION OF SUBSTANCE USE

How can we break the cycle of intergenerational substance use?

Substance Use Among Iowa Families

The Public Science Collaborative (PSC) interviewed 41 current and former substance using parents to understand the strengths, barriers, and journeys of Iowa families struggling with substance use addiction. The goal was to gather stories from real people with lived experience to inform policy and programming. Three patterns emerged from their stories, including:

Economic Vulnerability: Economic stressors including unstable employment, felony charges limiting job prospects, and fines and fees made recovery difficult.

Social Isolation & Stigma: Substance use initiation was often a response to feelings of loneliness or a desire to "fit in." The stigma of substance use discouraged parents from engaging in the community.

Trauma, Coping, & Resilience: Trauma was prevalent in the lives of everyone interviewed and substance use was a common coping strategy. Every parent also had an incredible sense of strength and resilience.

Recommendations

Knowing the pain points can help communities create targeted solutions that address the needs of real families in Iowa. Recommended actions include:

- Growing substance free social networks and connecting with stable employment opportunities.
- Providing community trainings to help reduce stigma in the way people talk about substance use.
- Implementing trauma-informed interventions across the continuum of care.
- Developing family-centric programming to reduce generational transmission of substance use.
- Promoting wraparound models of treatment addressing physical and mental health to help address past trauma.
- Creating educational and workforce development programs to increase employment opportunities.
- Incentivizing local businesses to offer job training and employment for people with a history of substance use.

Scan here to learn more about these and other recommendations!

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