

ALDAF

POSITION STATEMENT

ICE (Crystal Methamphetamine)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Australian Lions Drug Awareness Foundation (ALDAF) has been serving Australian schools and communities for over 25 years to provide alcohol and other drug information. In more recent years the Foundation had focused on youth health. ALDAF has a commitment to support Lions clubs and schools nationally to encourage the development and promotion of prevention strategies through community action, health promotion, information and advocacy. ([ALDAF], 2015)

2. WHAT IS ICE?

Ice is a street name for crystal methamphetamine, a powerful, synthetic stimulant drug. Stimulant drugs speed up the messages going to and from the brain. Ice is more potent than other forms of amphetamines. It is more pure than the powder form of methamphetamine (speed). (Australian-Drug-Foundation, 2013)

3. PREVALENCE AND IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reported in the 2013 National Household Drug Strategy Survey “while there was no significant rise in meth/amphetamine use in 2013 (stable at around 2.1%), there was a change in the main form of the drug used. Among meth/amphetamine users, use of powder fell, from 51% to 29%, while the use of ice (or crystal methamphetamine) more than doubled, from 22% in 2010 to 50% of all amphetamine users in 2013 (p7) (AIHW, 2013). These figures include people who had only used an amphetamine once.

Individuals requiring treatment are more likely to be consumers using ice more than once a month and who have developed a dependency on the drug. (Lee, 2015)

On average young Australians first try amphetamines at the age of 18.6 years (AIHW, 2013, White, 2012). Ice is disproportionately represented in ambulance presentations with it being the fourth most common drug involved in ambulance attendances, following alcohol, benzodiazepines and non-opioid analgesics (such as paracetamol) (Lloyd, 2014)

4. THE ROLE OF ALDAF

ALDAF historically has created and provided the majority of its services and resources for school-aged children, their teachers and parents. Statistically the vast majority of school-aged children and youth are not using any form of meth/amphetamine. However, a reflection of general community awareness and concern has introduced a dichotomy in that Lions Clubs throughout Australia are increasingly being asked to assist in creating a better understanding of illicit drug use and to help create community strategies specifically around ice.

ALDAF through its’ philanthropic connection to Lions Australia and its established national communication pathways can help to reduce the potential harms related to the use and misuse of ice through:

5.1 Awareness

ALDAF is committed to sourcing, creating and distributing evidence-based resources to Australian schools, Lions Clubs and communities. The current portfolio includes a broad selection of drug education and mental health materials representing a continuum of legal and illicit substances.

5.2 Prevention

Prevention of the misuse of any legal or illicit substance is the single most cost-effective strategy to eliminate relationship, social, societal, financial and environmental harms. ALDAF is positioned to provide an advocacy service for, and information to, Lions members to increase their knowledge about the potential effects and impacts of the use of ice.

Prevention is a multi-faceted tool. Evidence indicates young people are more likely to make healthy decisions when better informed. (BetterHealthVictoria, 2011) ALDAF is committed through its website, newsletter, Tune In Not Out interactive online youth tool and its ALDAF Community Initiatives Project to support Australian Lions Clubs to increase their communication, partnership and engagement with young people.

The same established communication channels allow ALDAF to advocate for realistic, evidence-based facts about ice and other substances. It is recognised the majority of young people choose not to use meth/amphetamines. ALDAF is committed to promoting prevention messages and to recognising the potential in younger members of our population. There is documented benefit in providing young people with a suite of positive decision making skills that protect them from multiple risk factors, to be able to party safely and to make optimistic life choices. (Cahill, 2013)

5.3 Increasing Community Capacity

Australian and international evidence clearly highlights a reduction in drug use or other potentially harmful behaviours when young people have a respectful relationship with parents or a significant older person, are actively engaged in activities which help to improve the wellbeing of other people, have a positive identity and maintain positive values (Resilient_Youth_Australia, 2015)

ALDAF is positioned to support schools, communities and parents in promoting prevention and demand reduction strategies through its four flagship projects – Tune In Not Out, the ALDAF Community Initiatives Project, Lions Quest, and Fresh Face Friday.

There is overwhelming evidence indicating young people are less likely to misuse alcohol and other substances, including ice, when they have purpose and are recognised as valuable individuals within their schools and communities. (Burgess, 2012) ALDAF actively promotes the engagement of young people in cross-generational activities, community-based activities and supports Lions Clubs to create meaningful social and employment opportunities for young people.

The promotion of increased community capacity, which has the intrinsic value of protecting the social and health needs of individuals within local populations, is a core principle for the work and services provided by ALDAF Board, staff and Consultants.

6. CONCLUSION

Using ice is the choice of any individual at any given time. Society as a whole is healthier when there is no or moderated use of legal or illicit substances. To this end, ALDAF will continue to provide support and information to Australian Lions Clubs, schools, parents and communities which assists young people to be well informed and confident to make safe, healthy lifestyle decisions.

Brenda Hosking
ALDAF National Drug Education Consultant
August 2015

Updated November 2015

REFERENCES

- [ALDAF], A. L. D. A. F. 2015. *The Australian Lions Drug Awareness Foundation - About Us* [Online]. [Accessed 2015].
- AIHW 2013. National Drug Strategy Household Survey - detailed report. *In: AUSTRALIAN-INSTITUTE-OF-HEALTH-AND-WELFARE* (ed.). Canberra ACT: Australian Government.
- AUSTRALIAN-DRUG-FOUNDATION 2013. Fact Sheet - ICE (crystal methamphetamine). *In: FOUNDATION, A. D.* (ed.) first ed. Melbourne, Australia: The Australian Drug Foundation.
- BETTERHEALTHVICTORIA. 2011. *Partying safely - tips for teenagers* [Online]. Melbourne, Victoria: State Government of Victoria in consultation with reachout.com. Available: http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Partying_safely_tips_for_teenagers [Accessed 2013].
- BURGESS, J. 2012. The cross sector alcohol education initiative 2012: student and parent engagement.
- The report of the Department for Education and Child Development component of the Cross sector alcohol education initiative 2012: student and parent engagement implemented in 16 DECD schools and supported by the DECD Drug Strategy as part of a cross sector initiative in 40 schools. . Adelaide: Department for Education and Child Development [DECD].
- CAHILL, H., BEADLE, SALLY., VENNING, LYNNE., RAMSDEN, ROBYN., AND MIDFORD, RICHARD 2013. GET READY (research-based education addressing drugs and youth) - The A-Z Teacher Guide on licit and illicit drugs. Melbourne, Australia: The State of Victoria (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development).
- LEE, N. 2015. Are we in the midst of an ice epidemic? A snapshot of meth use in Australia. *In: CONVERSATION, T.* (ed.) *The Conversation*.
- LLOYD, B., MATTHEWS, S., & GAO, C.X. 2014. *Ambo Project – Alcohol and drug related ambulance attendances: Trends in alcohol and drug related ambulance attendances in Victoria 2012/13*. [Online]. Fitzroy. Available: <http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au/topics/quick-statistics#amphetamines> [Accessed 2015].
- RESILIENT_YOUTH_AUSTRALIA. 2015. *Developmental Assets* [Online]. Melbourne. Available: <http://resiliencyouth.org.au/222> [Accessed 2015].
- WHITE, V., & BARIOLA, E. 2012. Australian secondary school students' use of tobacco, alcohol, and over-the-counter and illicit substances in 2011. *In: THE CANCER COUNCIL, V.* (ed.). Melbourne.