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Family Drug Support
PO Box 7363, Leura NSW 2780
Ph: (02) 4782 9222
Fax: (02) 4782 9555
Website: www.fds.org.au
ISSN: 1833-4997

Stepping Stones To Success: 2001 – Present

Theo Chang

Introduction

This reports draws on data captured from the Control, Pre, Post and Follow Up questionnaires administered to those who completed the Stepping Stones to Success course. Along the way, we will look at the evolution of the questionnaire from 2001 to the present. Comparisons will be made from the four sets of data to see if participants benefit from completing the course. In addition to providing analysis on the entire dataset from 2001 to present, this report will also provide a subset for the reporting period of July 2012 to December 2012 as per DOHA funding requirements.

What is Stepping Stones to Success (SSS)?

Stepping Stones to Success (SSS) is Family Drug Support's (FDS) award winning [winner of 'Excellence in Prevention and Community Education' – 2009 National Annual Drug & Alcohol awards] flagship workshop/course.

It was developed and written by Tony Trimmingham in 2000 and incorporates the families stages of change model. SSS is specifically designed for family members who are supporting a drug and/or alcohol dependent – the course is not for the actual user.

The course is either run over two weekends or over nine weeks. It is a psycho-educational and experiential format that aims to make family members more resilient and better able to cope. This is achieved by providing the skills needed and strengthening relationships (with the user and other family members) in order to survive the journey intact. In terms of outcomes, family members will have increased confidence and competence in managing the complex nature of drug and alcohol issues.

Frequency of delivery and location of Stepping Stones to Success (SSS)

The course was first delivered in 2001 and continues to run today. Between 2001 and present, SSS has been delivered 118 servicing 1,160 participants. The location of SSS is a mixture of metropolitan and regional/rural settings.

Location	Frequency
1. NSW Sydney	30
2. NSW Regional/Rural	31
3. ACT	19
4. South Australia Adelaide	11
5. Victoria Melbourne	4
6. Victoria Regional/Rural	13
7. Queensland Brisbane	6
8. Queensland Regional	1
9. Western Australia	3

Evaluating the efficacy of SSS

FDS utilises an ‘Adjustment to Drug/Alcohol problem’ questionnaire to evaluate the efficacy of and to measure the outcome of the project. The questionnaire measures the following key areas for each course participant;

1. Anger – How anger is dealt with around the drug user and drug use?
2. Boundary – Are there workable boundaries in place?
3. Control – What is the level of ‘control’ around the drug situation and the user?
4. Denial – What is the level of acceptance or denial of the drug situation?
5. Family – What are the state of family relationships and the family unit as a whole?
6. Self-Esteem – What is the level of the individual’s self-esteem?
7. Trust – Is there open and honest communication and a genuine effort to re-establish trust with the drug user and within the family unit as a whole?
8. Total – An average score to evaluate the overall level of resilience and coping skills

October 2012 – Ethics Approval and Publication of Data

In October 2012, the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC), part of the University of NSW (UNSW) gave Ethics Approval to FDS to begin collecting data from the questionnaire for publication.¹ It is envisaged that publication will take place in 2014.

Various comparisons can be made from the questionnaires. They are:

Control and Pre – provides a pseudo Control group to measure what happens to a family member if left unsupported and without the benefit of completing SSS

Pre and Post – measures any increases (or decreases) as a result of completing SSS

Post and Follow Up – measures key areas 4-6 months after completing SSS. This indicates whether the benefits of SSS are sustainable. In cases where a participant experiences negative growth at Follow Up, a further comparison between Follow Up and either Control or Pre will indicate if the participant regresses to the levels prior to SSS.

The following are three sets of data (measured in percentage):

1. V1 Questionnaire 2001-2007 (only Pre and Post questionnaire)

Total Group	48
Total Participants	452

Changes from	Anger	Boundary	Control	Denial	Family	Self Esteem	Trust	Total Average
Pre to Post	13.53%	12.02%	12.41%	9.25%	10.24%	9.87%	8.27%	10.31%

2. V2 Questionnaire 2007 – Present (Control, Pre, Post, Follow Up)

Total Group	70
Total Participants	718
Control questionnaire	288

¹ SSS was endorsed by the Institute of Group Leaders (IGL) through their formalised accreditation process to Silver level. Gold level is attained through publication of research data. When FDS published the SSS data with NDARC UNSW, the organisation will become the first to attain gold level status with IGL.

Pre Questionnaire 693
 Post Questionnaire 693
 Follow Up Questionnaire 213

Changes from	Anger	Boundary	Control	Denial	Family	Self Esteem	Trust	Total Average
Control to Pre	-3.94%	-5.10%	-2.55%	1.06%	-1.32%	-2.06%	-1.77%	-2.16%
Pre to Post	11.62%	14.02%	19.40%	7.51%	13.14%	3.14%	12.78%	11.64%
Post to Follow Up	10.47%	2.15%	2.65%	3.05%	10.18%	18.06%	3.86%	7.40%

3. V2 Questionnaire July 2012 – December 2012 (Control, Pre, Post, Follow Up)

Coffs Harbour 8/12 9 participants
 Perth 8/12 11 participants
 Sydney 8/12 8 participants
 Adelaide 10/12 8 participants
 Geelong 10/12 13 participants
 Sydney 10/12 14 participants
 Port Macquarie 11/12 7 participants

 Total Group 7
 Total Participants 68
 Control questionnaire 28
 Pre Questionnaire 68
 Post Questionnaire 68
 Follow Up Questionnaire 19

Changes from	Anger	Boundary	Control	Denial	Family	Self Esteem	Trust	Total Average
Control to Pre	-4.43%	-5.11%	-4.25%	-4.36%	-6.04%	-0.93%	-5.96%	-5.11%
Pre to Post	9.51%	14.46%	20.01%	9.57%	15.24%	3.15%	14.22%	12.29%
Post to Follow Up	8.58%	1.26%	1.26%	2.63%	7.21%	7.47%	1.95%	4.16%

Conclusion

Stepping Stones to Success has run continuously from 2001 to present. Along the way, data have been captured to evaluate and measure the efficacy of the program in supporting and assisting family members who are supporting an AOD dependent.

From 2001 to May 2007, version 1 of the questionnaire was used to measure how participants deal with the following seven key areas around drug use and the drug user: Anger, Boundary, Control, Denial, Family, Self-Esteem, and Trust. An aggregate score reflects how the participant is coping in general with the journey. The questionnaire was administered to participants Pre and Post course. It was not tested for statistical relevance.

From May 2007 to present, version 2 of the questionnaire was used to measure the same seven key areas. The questionnaire was subjected to rigorous analysis utilising SPSS. In addition to Pre and Post administration, participants were sent the questionnaire on registration (Control) and at 4-6 months period following the course (Follow Up). This increased the frequency of questionnaire from two to four.

In 2008, Dr Anni Gethin of Argyle Research utilised the Control, Pre, Post, and Follow Up data to produce findings. At this time there was no Ethics Approval to publish the data.

In October 2012, the University of NSW National Drug and Alcohol

Research Centre granted Ethics Approval to Family Drug Support to collect Stepping Stones to Success data for publication. A steering committee was formed headed by UNSW NDARC with participation from FDS, Argyle Research and family members.

The data from the questionnaires whether they are from V1 or V2, the initial findings from Argyle Research in 2008 and subsequent data captured strongly supports the efficacy of Stepping Stones to Success. The general findings are;

Control and Pre course data comparison indicates that those who do not gain support (and complete SSS) are unlikely to increase in any of the seven key areas. In majority of cases, the data shows they are further likely to move backwards.

Pre and Post course data comparison indicates that those who complete SSS will benefit across all seven areas.

Post and Follow Up data comparison indicates that the level reached in the Post questionnaires are sustained at Follow Up. In many cases, participants were able to build on the changes across the board. Those who had reduction in the Follow Up scores when compared with Post did not revert back to Pre score levels.

Family Drug Support anticipates when the data is published from the Ethics Approved data (7/12 to 12/13), the above findings will be further supported.