

Effective treatments for youth co-occurring mental health and cannabis use problems

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Prevalence

In 2012, an estimated **2.7%** of the Canadian household aged **15 to 24** had a co-occurring mood/anxiety disorder and substance use disorder.

2012 Canadian Community Health Survey—
Mental Health
Canadian Government (2017)

Objective

To identify evidence-based treatments for youth co-occurring mental health and cannabis use problems

Method

Narrative **literature review**

Scopus® Google

Key words:(substance) AND (co-occurr* OR comorbid*) AND (youth OR adolescent*) AND (treatment OR intervention))

Ages: 12-25 years old

Cannabis: One of substances consumed

Scientific quality: GRADE system

Results

- ❖ 708 articles reviewed & 4 reports
- ❖ **Articles excluded:** Doubles, prevalence and risk factor articles, prevention interventions or treatment for one problem only
- ❖ **24 treatments** for youth co-occurring problems (found in 39 articles)

Treatments

3 types of treatment:

Cognitive-behavioural therapy, family therapy and medication treatments

- **Individual approaches** mainly used

- **Medication** : Suggested as as 2nd intention treatment
- after psychosocial treatments

Methodological findings

❖ **Scientific quality:** Very low to moderate

❖ **Sample size:** Varied
10-2484 participants (median= 47)

Mental health problems

- ❖ **Symptoms (not diagnosed):** Internalizing vs. externalizing
- ❖ **Disorders frequently targeted by treatments**
Depression, anxiety, conduct disorder, ADHD
- ❖ **Intervention impact** on the symptoms or on the severity of disorders: Measured differently (Ex. Youth-self report)

Cannabis use

- ❖ **Intervention impact** on cannabis use specified on 10 studies from 29
- ❖ **Reduction measured differently:**
 - Days of abstinence (Ex. « *Timeline Followback* »)
 - % on different scales (Ex. « *Substance Problems Index* »)
 - Grams/day

Promising treatments for youth co-occurring problems...

since they are supported for the treatment
of youth cannabis use problems

Community reinforcement approach

Objective: To reorganize the different aspects of the young person's life so that **behaviors that will lead to drug abstinence are rewarded** over behaviours that will not.

Meyers & Smith, 1995



Community reinforcement approach

- ❖ **Ages:** 12 to 24 years old
- ❖ **Professionals:** Therapist
(Ex. Psychologist, counsellor)
- ❖ **Sessions:** 12-14 sessions
(10 individual + 2 with parents + 2
with parents and young person)
- ❖ **Length :** 3 months (suggested)
- ❖ Cost-effective treatment

SAMHSA, 2001; Azrin et al., 1994; Slesnick et al., 2007;
Godley et al., 2014; Curtis et al., 2015; Dennis, 2014

Community reinforcement approach

- ❖ **Youth profile:** Homeless, in the judicial system, referred by parents or clinicians
- ❖ **Can treat** symptoms (in the absence of diagnosis) or disorders
- ❖ **Disorder:** Depression, anxiety, Conduct disorder
- ❖ **Setting:** Varied (house, school, clinics)

SAMHSA, 2001; Azrin et al., 1994; Slesnick et al., 2007; Godley et al., 2014; Curtis et al., 2015



Community reinforcement approach

10 core procedures

1. Problem solving Résolution de problèmes
2. Goals of counselling
3. Communication skills
4. Anger management
5. Medication monitoring (*if needed)
6. Functional analysis of substance use behaviours
7. Relapse prevention
8. Increasing prosocial activities
9. Caregiver skills
10. Adolescent care-giver skills

Community reinforcement approach

- ❖ **Positive reinforcement**
(Ex. Snacks offered)
- ❖ **Procedures can be adapted** for
co-occurring problems
- ❖ **Ex.** Functional analysis,
communication skills

SAMHSA, 2001; Godley et al., 2014

Multidimensional family therapy-MDFT

Objective: To treat drug use as a multidimensional problem targeting 4 domains of the adolescent's life: the adolescent, the parents, the family and his/her environment outside of the family.

SAMHSA, 2001; Liddle, 2018

Multidimensional family therapy

- ❖ **Ages:** 13 to 18 years old
- ❖ **Sessions :** 12-15 sessions
(6 individual, 3 with parents
et 3 with entire family)
- ❖ **Professionals:** Therapist
(Ex. psychologist, counsellor)
+ multidisciplinary team
- ❖ **Length :** 3 months (suggested)



Evidence:
**Multidimensional
family therapy**

- ❖ **Youth profile:** In the judicial system, referred by parents, clinicians or school, self-determined, and others
- ❖ **Can treat** symptoms (in the absence of a diagnosis) or disorders
- ❖ **Disorder:** Depression, ADHD, conduct disorder
- ❖ **Setting:** Family or addiction clinics

SAMHSA, 2001; Liddle et al., 2018; Schaub et al., 2013, Rigter et al., 2012

Multidimensional family therapy

- ❖ **Stage 1:** Therapeutic alliances
- ❖ **Stage 2:** Promoting change
- ❖ **Stage 3:** Reinforcing the change

SAMHSA, 2001; Liddle et al., 2018



Multidimensional family therapy

- ❖ Therapist **does not judge**
- ❖ Therapist helps parents **manage disappointment**
- ❖ Therapist helps youth **have positive goals and to identify the gaps in behaviour**
- ❖ **Ex.** Gap between drug use, delinquency & positive objectives

Recommended literature

Godley, S. H., Smith, J. E., Passeti, L. L., & Subramaniam, G. (2014). The Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach (A-CRA) as a Model Paradigm for the Management of Adolescents With Substance Use Disorders and Co-Occurring Psychiatric Disorders. *Substance Abuse, 35*(4), 352–363. doi: 10.1080/08897077.2014.936993

Liddle, H. A., Dakof, G. A., Rowe, C. L., Henderson, C., Greenbaum, P., Wang, W., & Alberg, L. (2018). Multidimensional Family Therapy as a community-based alternative to residential treatment for adolescents with substance use and co-occurring mental health disorders. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, 90*(April), 47–56. doi: 10.1016/j.jsat.2018.04.011

SAMHSA. (2001). Cannabis Youth Treatment Series: The Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach for Adolescent Cannabis User.

SAMHSA. (2001). Cannabis Youth Treatment Series: Multidimensional family therapy for adolescent cannabis users.

Ressources to implement treatment

Comunity reinforcement approach:

<https://www.chestnut.org/ebtx/training-and-certification/>

Multidimensional family therapy:

<http://www.mdft.org/Training-Program/3-Levels-of-Training/Level-2-Certification>

Thank you!!

References upon request