

**SUMMARY: Referral Pathways for alcohol and other drug support
in Alice Springs, Northern Territory**

Alcohol and other drug (AOD) use can have detrimental impacts on the health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Intergenerational trauma and poor mental health may contribute to and maintain high levels of AOD use.

Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs), such as the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation (Congress) in Alice Springs, are primary health-care services. They are planned and managed by local Indigenous Australian communities or organisations. These organisations play a key role in reducing the disproportionate burden of AOD-related harm in Aboriginal communities.

As part of the “[Making FASD history: A Multi-Site Prevention Program](#)”, formal Referral Pathways were created at Congress to assist staff in providing appropriate support for clients experiencing AOD use challenges. Initially, the profiles of vulnerable clients of Congress with a high risk of AOD use were identified. This resulted in three target groups: 1) young people aged 12-15 years; 2) men and women aged 16-49 years; and, 3) pregnant women.

Secondly, an [Environmental Scan](#) was undertaken. This scan identified AOD services, programs, activities, and gaps within Congress regarding delivery of these services. Consequently, the scan provided information and content for the development of the referral pathways.

Thirdly, the Referral Pathways documents were created, commencing in 2018 and completed in 2020. Pathways were identified and documented, with separate pathways created for each target group. The documents could also be used with clients to demonstrate the services and supports available to them. The documents were distributed to health staff of multiple Congress sites, in and around Alice Springs. Educational sessions with Congress health staff were held to inform them about the Referral Pathways.

Finally, a survey was distributed to evaluate the use of the referral documents. Evaluation findings demonstrated that 87% of survey respondents thought the Referral Pathways were easy to use, and 83% of respondents felt that the Referral Pathways were useful for their workplace. In addition, 83% of respondents indicated that they would use the Referral Pathways in the future.

This activity demonstrated the value of Referral Pathways in the ACCHO setting for clients requiring support for AOD use. Future iterations of the documents will be necessary, to ensure that they reflect the changing needs of clients, staff and services over time.

References available on request.

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