



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

BRIEF PROJECT OVERVIEW

In this project we are interested in finding out about your experiences growing up with a brother or sister who is using illicit drugs. This includes drugs like heroin, amphetamines/ speed/lce, marijuana/cannabis and ecstasy. Your brother/sister may be currently using illicit drugs, or it may have been in the past when you were growing up with them.

Australian drug use surveys in the general population show that many people have tried different illicit drugs at some time in their life, but most have not gone on to use these drugs regularly or at a level that caused significant problems for the user and/or their families. If your sibling(s) only tried illicit drugs a few times (eg. at a party) then you would not be the focus of this survey. For this survey we are interested in situations where your sibling's drug use has been more of a problem. This could be because the drug use was/is longer term, or because it had significant consequences for your brother/sister (eg. health, legal, employment, study) and/or because it had significant consequences for other family members (eg. caused family members a lot of worry). Note that while people sometimes consume alcohol at a level that causes problems for themselves or their families, alcohol use on its own is not a focus of this research.

Before reading through the detailed information below, please ensure that you are eligible to complete the survey.

You should:

- Be aged between 18 and 35 years old
- Living in Australia
- Currently or previously have lived with/grown up with a brother or sister who was using illicit drugs (eg. heroin, cannabis, amphetamines/speed, etc.)

If you are eligible your contribution would be very valuable- please read through the information below. At the end of the information is a link which will take you to the survey.

If you are not eligible to complete the survey but have concerns about a relative's drug use, you may find some of the contacts in our "Supports" page useful. Please click on the supports button to the left.

PROJECT INFORMATION & INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Living with drugs in the family: The needs and experiences of siblings of illicit drug users.

This research project is being undertaken to explore the needs and issues for people who have lived in a family where their brother(s) or sister(s) are using illicit drugs. To take part in this research you should be between the ages of 18 to 35 years old, and either be currently living or have previously lived with a sibling who is using illicit drugs. The purpose of this information section is to answer some key questions you may have about the research before deciding to participate in the survey.

Why complete the survey?

It is well known that drug use can sometimes impact in a variety of ways on family members, and that families cope with drug use in a variety of ways. While there has been some research about what it is like for families and what has helped them to cope, there is limited information on what it is like growing up in a family where the brother (s) or sister(s) are using illicit drugs. It is hoped that this project will help to gain a better understanding of the issues for these family members, and to determine what things help family members to cope. It will also explore what type of services and supports, if any, would be helpful for family members where a sibling is using illicit drugs.

Where is the research based?

The research project is based in the School of Social Work at The University of Melbourne. The project has been approved by The University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee- Approval number 0604158 for the period 1/11/2006 to 31/12/2007.

Who is conducting the research?

David Rose is conducting the research as part of a doctoral thesis (PhD) in the School of Social Work at the University of Melbourne. The research is being supervised by Dr Louise Harms, Senior Lecturer in the School of Social Work.

The contact details of the researchers are:

David Rose (Primary researcher)
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Dr Louise Harms (Supervising researcher)
Senior Lecturer
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Dr Lynda Campbell (Supervising researcher)
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What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate you will complete an online survey that should take between 20 to 30 minutes to complete. Most of the questions can be answered by simply clicking on a button, and there are also sections for you to write further information if you wish.

The survey asks you questions about:

- Some basic information about you and your sibling (eg. age, type of drug use, whether you live in the city or a rural area)
- What difficulties, if any, were caused by your sibling's drug use?
- What factors helped you/your family to cope with your sibling's drug use?
- Where (if at all) did you seek information, support or help about your sibling?
- What type of things (if anything) would be helpful for family members in your situation?

You will not be asked any information that could identify you and you can complete the survey and remain anonymous.

At the completion of the survey and on the "supports" page of this website there is a section that provides contacts for information and support services that may be useful to you.

What will happen to the information I provide?

Once you have completed the survey and submitted it, the information you have provided will be stored in a database and then accessed by the researchers. There is no information stored that will be able to personally identify you. The data will be grouped together for analysis and presented in reports and publications on the project. Individual comments you write in the survey may be used in the final reports on the project but there is no way this will be able to identify you personally.

The electronic data from the surveys will be retained for a period of 5 years from when reports on the research are published as required by University of Melbourne regulations.

Will the information I provide be confidential?

Yes, your information will be confidential. As your participation in the research is totally voluntary, you do not need to provide personally identifiable information such as your name, address, or birth date to take part in the research. As the information you provide will be given on an anonymous basis, there will not be any data collected that could be linked to you personally. Generally, the data will be grouped together for reporting in publications on the project.

Do I have to take part in this research?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You can decide to withdraw at any time. You can discontinue completing the survey at any time simply by leaving the web page or closing down your web browser. You should note that once you have submitted the survey it will not be possible to retrieve it and delete the data if you wish to withdraw from the research as there is no way to identify which survey you have submitted.

Are there any risks to me from taking part in the research?

It is unlikely that there are any significant risks to you from taking part in this research. As some parts of the survey may discuss matters that have caused you some stress or worry at times (eg. your sibling's drug use), if you feel uncomfortable

or distressed after the survey you are welcome to contact the researcher to discuss your concerns (anonymously by email or phone if you wish). You may also wish to contact one of the community support and information services provided at the end of the survey.

Are there any benefits for me from participating in the research?

Although your participation is not likely to result in any immediate benefit for you, you will be providing valuable information that may be useful for other people who experience similar situations in their families as you have. Your information may also help us to understand what type of services and supports, if any, would be most helpful for people living with drug use in the family.

Where can I find the results of the research?

The results of the research project will not be available until early 2008. A summary of the research will be placed on the project website at <http://www.siblingdrugproject.org> and on the School of Social Work Trauma and Resilience Research Unit website <http://www.socialwork.unimelb.edu.au/research/trauma/> at that time. On the "findings" page of this website you can also register your email address to receive a summary of the research when it is available if you would like.

Who can I contact if I have concerns about the research or require further information?

If you have any concerns about the research project or would like more information about it you can contact the researchers with the contact details given in the section above or on the "Contacts" page. .

If you have concerns about the conduct of the research you can also contact The Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, Phone: 8344 2071 Fax: 9347 6739.

How do I agree to participate?

If you have read through all the information on the research project and are happy to participate, you will need to click on the button below and you will then be directed to the survey. On the survey page it will ask you to confirm you have read and understand the above information before you can proceed with the survey.