

About This Manual

This manual will provide a resource for a variety of audiences, including:

- Those aspiring to careers in which alcohol or other drug problems will be their primary responsibility.
- Professionals in human service fields such as social work, psychology, or psychiatry, with formal credentials but limited knowledge and skills specifically about alcohol or other drug problems.
- Persons interested in the prevention of such problems, including members of parent or citizen groups.
- Persons whose life experiences have included exposure to such problems.
- Community members who want to foster social change with respect to problems related to the use of alcohol and other drugs in their communities.

This manual has three key purposes:

- To share basic knowledge about the field.
- To raise important questions.
- To encourage further personal study.

The authors have drawn from a large body of concepts, information, and experiences on this topic to present a “best estimate” of what is known and not known in a brief but not oversimplified way. We do not want to mislead you, however, by suggesting that there are “simple answers,” or that there is a “single right way” to approach these problems. You need to understand that this subject matter contains many complexities and ambiguities. Even as you discover answers, you will surely find many new questions as you move beyond the introductory stages to your own involvement in the field. You will want to continue to question and to keep learning as the field changes, new research arises, and you encounter new challenges.

This manual was developed and written by a diverse group of professionals (see *About the Authors* at the end of this manual). It attempts to present multiple perspectives and a thoughtful and open-minded inquiry into a very complex subject.

Please do not mistake this manual for an “end-all” textbook on the subject. The very nature of this field makes that goal impossible! Please *do* consider it a *working* resource—designed to

introduce the “big picture” and point the way to additional resources.

Content of This Manual

The chapters have been organized into nine distinct units of study, each with its own focus and learning objectives.

Chapter 1 will provide you with a brief overview of the field. Chapter 2 will offer some observations about the dimensions of the problems we will address. In Chapters 3 and 4, respectively, we will discuss the sociocultural aspects and psychological components of these problems. Having recognized the social and individual perspectives, we will approach the “body” part of the “mind/body” complex in Chapter 5 with a review of the nervous system and the drugs which are the main agents associated with problems.

Chapter 6 will attempt to pull all these aspects together and look at some models for clarifying the causes of problems with alcohol and other drugs. We will focus on intervention in Chapter 7; having identified the problems, what do we do about them? Chapter 8 ventures into the “real world” in which those in the treatment and prevention fields function and describes some critical issues that affect what we do. Chapter 9 will offer you a further opportunity to develop your sociocultural competence and use what you’ve learned in analyzing some examples of this problem world. We’ll conclude with an *Afterword* describing the changing characteristics of this field and ways in which they may influence its evolution.

Mastery of this material will give those aspiring to a career in treatment or prevention of problems with alcohol or other drugs the basic information needed prior to entry into Michigan’s counselor certification structure.

Format of the Manual

You will notice that the pages have been laid out in a two-column format: the wide inner columns are dedicated to the chapter text, and the narrow outer columns are set aside as a place for supporting information. Please take advantage of this space to add your own notes and raise your own questions.

Terminology

As is true in all other human service areas, people who work with alcohol and other drug problems have developed their own jargon—a kind of “shorthand” for communicating common concerns of the group. Learning the language is an important part of entering any new area.

This manual will periodically introduce key terms in common use within our field. These words and phrases will be typed in boldface on their first mention. Sometimes they will be defined in the text immediately following their mention. All will be referenced in the *Glossary* at the end of the manual.

We have made a conscious effort not to use some of the most familiar jargon. Value-laden words like “substance abuse,” “addiction,” and “chemical dependency” are widely and loosely applied to a range of conditions. You will find that we will more often refer to “use,” “problems related to use,” and “consequences of using” alcohol and other drugs.

Information Sources

Footnoted material is referenced by number in the text and at the end of each chapter.

How This Manual Was Created

The Fundamentals of Alcohol and Other Drug Problems is the product of a developmental process requiring input from many contributors. At the center of this project was a 6-member committee known as the Editorial Review Board (ERB), selected and appointed for the task by the Michigan Center of Substance Abuse Services. The ERB worked closely with Karen Schrock, Administrator, Center for Substance Abuse Services (CSAS), as well as with many other human services professionals throughout the state.

Members of the ERB served as the principal authors of the project, devoting many months to research, drafting, and rewriting—not to mention the lively discussions—to shape this text. When we speak to you in this manual, it is as the collective “voice” of the ERB.

We sincerely hope you will find *The Fundamentals of Alcohol and Other Drug Problems* to be a helpful guide and a valuable tool as you embark on your individual course of study.