

## CLINICAL SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

In some situations the maintenance of client safety becomes the primary issue and may preclude the involvement of significant others and family, or require careful management to protect people.

### **Examples of careful management could include:**

- Involving a co-therapist of opposite gender.
- Clearly stated rules.
- Establishing a close liaison with other agencies, especially those providing care and protection, mental health services and services addressing family violence.
- Attendance of Kaumatua or Kuia at whanau hui will help maintain cultural safety.

If the situation is significantly impeding the client's ability to change, residential treatment needs to be considered.

### **Safety reasons for not working with family or whanau may be:**

- Entrenched and pervasive domestic violence.
- Existing sexual abuse.
- Unresolved conflict following separation, particularly regarding custody issues.
- Evidence of stress, mental health problems, controlling behaviour, or pending separation, that precludes effective intra-family communication.
- Undue hardship for people to attend sessions, or where the client is emphatic that they do not want others involved.
- Where the practitioner decides that this approach would detract from engaging with the client, disempower the client, or possibly impede the attainment of identified goals.

In some of these instances referral to specialist services will be required in conjunction with other treatment options.

Listen carefully if the client refuses to give consent. The reasons given will provide additional information that the counsellor and the client can address.

The safety of all family members including children should be considered and a comprehensive assessment will include these considerations.

If a person discloses that they have experienced abuse or other forms of violence:

- Validate their disclosure
- Determine their immediate safety and ensure this is able to be maintained with a plan
- Clarify what you will do including the limits to confidentiality
- Do not interview children about details as this will interfere with any investigative process.
- Discuss your next steps with a supervisor.
- Refer to the appropriate agency

This resource provides a process to assess the safety of children when alcohol and other drug use is of concern in a family. It is designed to be used in conjunction with a management plan that is based on a trusting working relationship between client and practitioner.

Always seek supervision and support when considering taking action over safety concerns. Communication and collaboration between agencies is vital in addressing issues of family safety.

© 2008 KINA - Families and Addictions Trust