

## **DOING FAMILY INCLUSIVE ASSESSMENT - GUIDLINES**

The assessment process can be focused on the presenting client with the family contributing, or on the family processes as a whole. This will depend on the counsellor's perspective, the presenting issues at the time and the family's expectations. It is essential to commence a session with clarification of expectations.

**Including family in assessment provides an opportunity to view the client as part of the family system as well as obtaining relevant clinical information from family members.**

This approach acknowledges the various roles and activities of those present that could lead to ensuring effective recovery processes for all involved. Specific needs of family members could include, for example, referral for additional support for children, attendance at AlAnon, (Go **here**: <http://www.al-anon.org.nz/> ) or specialist physical or mental health input.

When assessing the client, use your agency's documentation if required, or your own process and allow the family or whanau to contribute.

The National Addiction Centre's comprehensive alcohol and drug assessment tool should be considered.

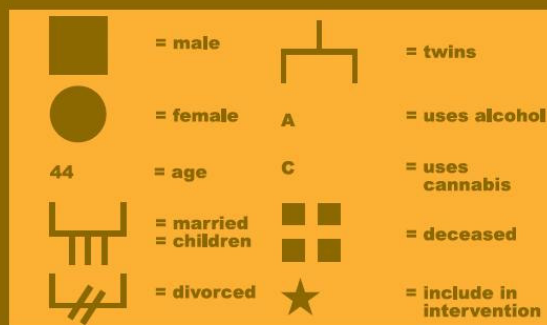
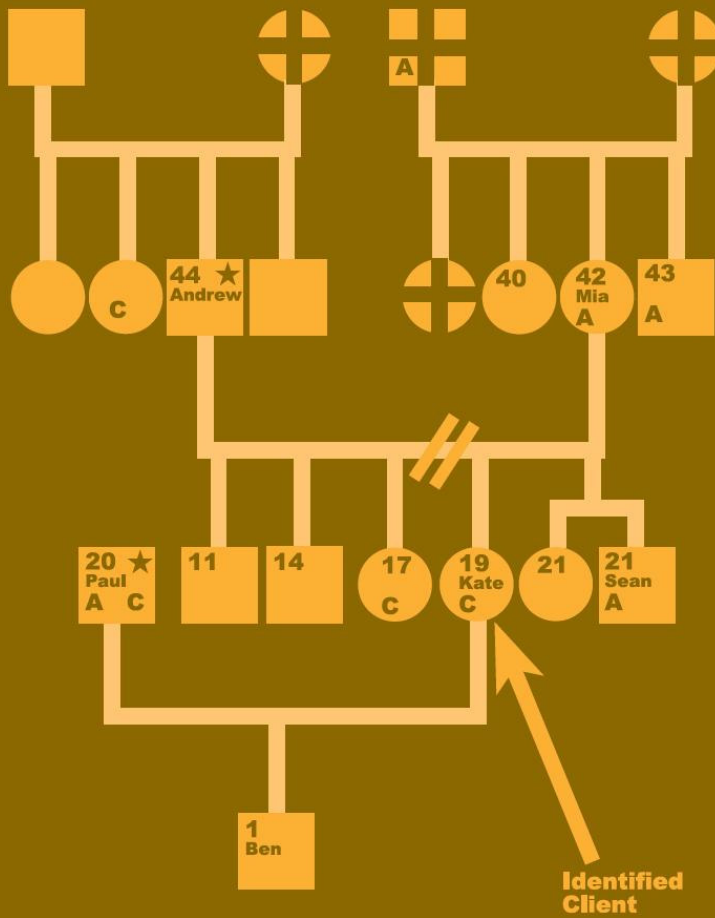
McCrary (2005) recommends a number of screening tools specifically for family. Similarly the Family Support Scale (Hanley, Tasse, Aman & Pace, 1998) is a useful tool for detailing a client's social networks.

**[Some excellent tools for doing Family assessments are available at www.kina... - Link to page...](#)**

### **THE GENOGRAM**

A widely used tool that has both assessment and therapeutic value is the genogram. This is a visual representation of family relationships, roles and patterns of addiction. It is usefully constructed in conjunction with the client.

## A Genogram



In counselling, Kate constructed a genogram showing her family. Kate is married to Paul and has a 1 year old son, Ben. She identified the people who use alcohol and cannabis. Kate would like to give up cannabis and wants her husband and father to be involved.

This illustration demonstrates a common method of constructing a genogram.

A genogram begins with the client and their immediate family and then the construction of a family tree back for at least three generations using the symbols shown in the example. A discussion is held about patterns of addictive behaviour, mental health issues, and other intergenerational issues. These are then added to the diagram. The effect of this is to emphasise the pervasive impact of addiction and can stimulate a desire to halt the family cycle of addiction.

As importantly, this process also identifies key family members who can be included in recovery plans, particularly those who are seen to be supportive. Family members who have displayed resilience in the face of addiction can be identified and acknowledged.

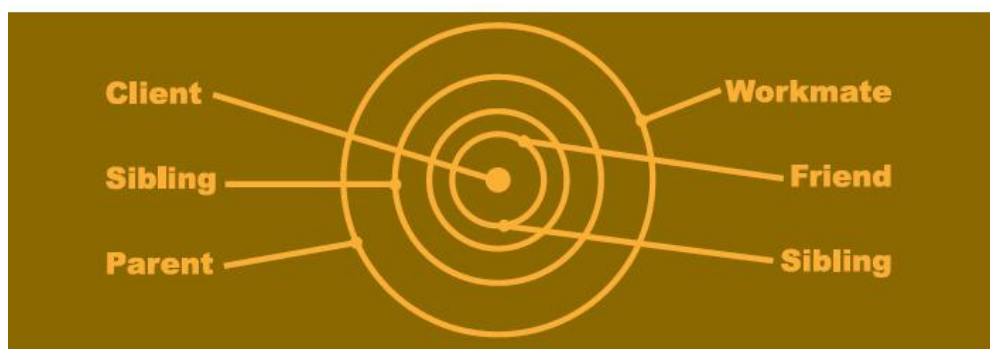
## OTHER VISUAL ASSESSMENT TOOLS -

The initial assessment clarifies what changes the client needs to make, their motivation, goals and who the client will work with in their recovery.

As demonstrated in the table below, use a whiteboard to help the client identify who is affected by the alcohol or drug use, who could be included in recovery planning, and who can provide additional support for the client throughout treatment.

<b>People affected by my A&amp;D use:</b> *Jo, Partner *Lu (14), Adam (12) and Tess (9) (Children) Work Colleagues *Rangi Mum	<b>Support People:</b> Jo Lu Rangi
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**\*People I need in my recovery plan.**



Other visual forms such as concentric circles or a sociogram can be used to illustrate important support people and their relative proximity to the client. See the form at:

Download a sociogram form?

### THINK IN TERMS OF “POSITIVE ASSESSMENTS” AS WELL:

It is also useful to allow time in the assessment to identify the factors currently working well in the family that are valuable to maintain and build upon in recovery.

These may include:

- Established family routines and rituals
- Effective communication processes
- Positive parenting practices
- Flexible roles and structures
- Family belief systems and positive attitudes towards change

It is important not to disrupt, through intervention, family routines such as childcare arrangements or family time together that provide a sense of continuity and predictability. Other inherent family qualities such as helpfulness, caring and respect for members or extended whanau support can be acknowledged and enhanced in the recovery process.

Ask questions about:

- Family routines.
- How the family spends time together.
- What they enjoy doing.

- What is important to the family as a unit.
- The skills and attributes of different members.
- How the family manages stress.
- What else supports the family during challenging times.

See the “ROPES” assessment outline for examples of strength-based questions  
Add ROPES assessment and reference

Validate the family and educate about the value of these processes through positive comment. Enjoy these stories with the family.

Assessment should also determine the level of commitment of those present, the capacity of people to support recovery and how family members are able and prepared to support each other.

*Do include significant others, family/whanau, close friends wherever possible. Not only do these people provide more information and a different perspective but they are also crucial allies in the development and maintenance of change strategies’ (ALAC, 1996).*