

# KODY - Research Brief



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## **Kids First (Caring Dads) and Odyssey House Victoria (Kids in Focus)** **Evaluating an all-of-family intervention at the intersections** **of DFV and AOD** **KODY - Research Brief**

The KODY research project is a multi-component evaluation of the innovative KODY program, integrating the work of our partner organisations with academic rigour, to address the complex issues for children, women, and men living with domestic and family violence (DFV) and alcohol and other drugs (AOD). Recent evidence shows that men's use of AOD consistently emerges as one of only few consistent predictors of men's continued use of violence<sup>1</sup> and that the occurrence of DFV with AOD significantly increases the severity of abuse and violence experienced by family members.<sup>2</sup>

Led by academic researchers and practice leaders, the project focuses on families living with both DFV and AOD use, the combined impacts living at this intersection has on the safety and wellbeing of children and their mothers, and the implications for policy development in implementing an 'all-of-family' service response across the DFV and AOD sectors.

### **The KODY Program**

The KODY program integrates and enhances the work of two non-government organisations in Melbourne, Australia. Kids First Australia provides a *Caring Dads* program,<sup>3</sup> targeted at fathers who use violence, focusing on their fathering, and attitudes and behaviours towards their children and children's mother. Odyssey House Victoria provides a range of AOD treatment programs for parents affected by problematic substance use, as well as services to their children, including *Kids in Focus*, a family-centred program that emphasises the safety and wellbeing of children in addition to providing parenting and family support.

The KODY program innovates by:

- 1) bringing AOD content into Kids First's *Caring Dads* program and providing case coordination for fathers through a collaborative effort by DV and AOD practitioners; and
- 2) taking an all-of-family approach that integrates Odyssey House Victoria's *Kids in Focus* family-centred program to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and providing parenting and family support through family case coordination.

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<sup>1</sup> Choenni, V., Hammink, A., & van de Mheen, D. (2017). Association Between Substance Use and the Perpetration of Family Violence in Industrialized Countries: A Systematic Review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 18*(1), 37–50.

<sup>2</sup> Canfield, M., Radcliffe, P., D'Oliveira, A. F. P. L., & Gilchrist, G. (2019). Factors associated with the severity of IPV perpetrated by substance using men towards current partner. *Advances in Dual Diagnosis*.

<sup>3</sup> Scott, K., Kelly, T., Crooks, C., & Francis, K. (2018). *Caring dads: Helping fathers value their children*. 2nd Edition. London, ON: Trafford

## The KODY Research

Funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage grant, with development of the research design supported by a Learning Systems Grant (DFFH & CFECFW), the KODY program of research aims to both evaluate the innovative KODY program and, at the same time, investigate several cutting-edge issues and practice and policy levels: the role of a child-centred all-of-family approach in addressing DFV where AOD use co-occurs, the possibilities of understanding children's experiences of DFV through their participation in KODY, the organisational change necessary to successfully offer a cross-sectoral program and the policy implications for cross-sectoral collaboration.

The KODY research project comprises a quasi-experimental summative evaluation (Component A), a formative evaluation (Component B), and a developmental evaluation utilising inquiry methods to explore specific innovations in the project (Components C, D, and E).

**Component A — Program effectiveness:** How effective is the KODY program in supporting safety for mothers and children from DFV and other AOD-related harms that are perpetrated by men who use DFV and AOD?

**Component B — Investigating processes of change:** How does the KODY program deepen understanding of the impact of DFV and AOD and what are the implications for service responses?

**Component C — All-of-family approach:** How does an integrated all-of-family approach contribute to the effectiveness of multisectoral AOD and DFV responses?

**Component D — Children's voices:** How can the perspectives of children be safely integrated into practice?

Includes a PhD study investigating children's experiences of the father-child relationship in the context of family violence and parental substance misuse (Larissa Fogden).

**Component E — Cross-sectoral collaboration and the policy context:** How does the KODY program strengthen the integration of the DFV and AOD sectors, to bridge the current silos in practice and policy?

Includes a PhD study investigating cross-sector collaboration between DFV and AOD services (Van Nguyen).

With a significant proportion of KODY service users anticipated to be from Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, attention to culturally sensitive practice will be integrated into all research components. The research is being conducted in consultation with the Odyssey House Victoria's Aboriginal Advisory Group to ensure the culture safety of the program and the research for all family members, including the processes required for a mainstream organisation to respond appropriately to its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.

## Project Team

Academic Team	Industry Partners
Prof. Cathy Humphreys - University of Melbourne	Kids First
Dr Margaret Kertesz - University of Melbourne	Odyssey House Victoria
Assoc. Prof. Katreena Scott - Western University, Canada	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)
Dr Anne-Marie Laslett - Latrobe University	PhD Students
Dr Menka Tsantefski - Griffith University	Van Nguyen - University of Melbourne
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