
NordAN resolution 2022: Alcohol and family life

The effects of alcohol are not limited to just the person who drinks it but also their family members. Alcohol use in the family can lead to stress, relationship problems, conflicts, unpredictability and even violence that can cause lasting emotional trauma.

Critical periods, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, can be particularly dangerous because they create an environment in which people's vulnerability is amplified. These settings may magnify the adverse effects of alcohol and result in outcomes that people are unsure how to handle.

Social services must be readily accessible, effective and consider the many conditions people face. When there is an alcohol problem in the family, multiple layers of harm must be addressed. In addition to the person suffering from an alcohol use disorder (AUD), his or her family members, particularly children, may require special attention and assistance. Although family-based treatment may be beneficial, it is vital to recognise that each individual has unique needs. We must be able to see multiple viewpoints and needs at the same time. For example, the parent with AUD may require treatment for the addiction, the other parent (if there is a non-addicted parent) may require assistance with co-addiction, both parents require support in their parenthood, and each of the children has their own needs.

We emphasise and acknowledge the following aspects of children's rights and needs, together with families with AUD's:

- ❖ The unborn child has the right to enter the world without being harmed by their parent's drinking or drug usage.
- ❖ Children have the right to a childhood free from harm caused by alcohol and other drugs.
- ❖ Children have the right to a childhood free from alcohol marketing and any pressure to drink alcohol or use other drugs.
- ❖ There should be efficient structures to find affected children and support them. The structures need to be in all areas where children are: health care, childcare/preschool, school etc.
- ❖ Knowledge, methods and structures also need to be where parents are. Everyone who works with adults with AUD-s should have a system in place for asking about children and ensuring that the children receive support as well.
- ❖ Reducing overall alcohol consumption is an important strategy to combat children's exposure to violence and intimate partner abuse.

We urge all governments and local municipalities to consider alcohol consumption in all family and children/youth strategies and programmes. It is critical that, during times such as COVID-19, we do not overlook the ever-present alcohol problem, which only worsens when other risks arise.

Additionally, ***we want to emphasise Iceland's commitment*** to mental health among young people during its ***Nordic Council of Minister's [presidency in 2023](#)***, stating that "prevention has long since proven its worth as an effective tool for promoting physical and mental health, not least among young people".

We also want to emphasise and endorse the [Baltic Assembly's 41st Session Resolution](#), which calls for faster implementation of the World Health Organization's SAFER initiative, which can safeguard families and individuals from alcohol harm.

And we turn to the Norwegian Presidency of the Nordic Council (in 2023), which has acknowledged that the pandemic impacted young people's mental health. As Norway's Presidency seeks to learn how the epidemic was managed to enhance the control of young people's health in times of crisis, the usage and effect of various substances must also be addressed.