

National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children Training Program: Moving from Awareness to Action to Sustainability

The National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children has created a three-tiered training program that is designed to increase awareness about drug endangered children, implement a collaborative multi-disciplinary response, and create sustainable alliances for on-going collaboration and change. Here is a description of National DEC's Training Program.



Core DEC Awareness - Identifying Drug Endangered Children: A Collaborative Approach

Ignored, abused, and abandoned – these are some of the chronic conditions experienced by children raised in environments where there is substance abuse or illegal drug use, manufacturing, cultivation and distribution.

Drug endangered children are part of a very large, and growing population of children whose lives have been seriously and negatively impacted by dangerous drugs. Thousands of these children across our country go unnoticed and do not receive the necessary care and treatment to heal from these abusive environments. If ignored and left unsupported these children continue to be victims caught in a cycle of drug abuse. The primary challenge with illegal substance abuse and drug endangered children is in aligning the agencies and systems responsible for preventing, intervening, and treating these issues to increase the chances of better outcomes.

Through the National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (National DEC), the drug endangered children mission focuses on the formation of multi-disciplinary partnerships that take advantage of existing agency personnel, resources, and responsibilities and coordinates their mutual interests and duties to meet the specific needs of these children. The focus on these children's needs extends throughout the entire process until the child is in a permanent, safe and positive functioning environment. The Core DEC Awareness training looks at overcoming the challenges in aligning the agencies and systems responsible for preventing, intervening, and treating these issues to change the trajectories of the lives of drug endangered children and break multi-generational cycles of abuse and neglect.

Learning Objectives:

- 1) Gain awareness about drug endangered children and the risks they face so that professions interacting with these victims recognize the need to facilitate multi-disciplinary, collaborative responses to better meet the needs of these children
- 2) Understand the many opportunities (often missed) to identify children living in dangerous drug environments and the benefits of intervention at the earliest possible point when endangerment is suspected to reduce physical and psychological harm to children;
- 3) Learn what a multidisciplinary collaborative response looks like and how it incorporates the unique and often limited resources within a community and applies them in a manner that provides better care for drug endangered children.

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The DEC Approach “Moving from Awareness to Action...”

This training by the National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (National DEC) focuses on how to implement the DEC Approach which is a comprehensive strategy based on a common vision, collaboration that is on-going between various disciplines and agencies, and on-going changes in practice. This DEC Approach has proven to be effective in improving the likelihood of better outcomes for drug endangered children. This training provides insights about how various practitioners—including child welfare professionals, law enforcement officers, court/judicial professionals, prosecutors, probation/parole, medical personnel, educators and treatment providers—are in a position to identify, protect, and serve drug endangered children and their families.

The trainers discuss the identification of risks to drug endangered children and what all disciplines can look for when collecting evidence and information on drug endangered children. The trainers utilize pictures and video of real DEC scenarios to assist professionals in understanding what to look for regarding the “life of the child”. The training includes trainer led discussions and hands on exercises to demonstrate how implementing collaboration enhances the likelihood of better outcomes for drug endangered children.

Learning Objectives:

1. Gain insight about how our own experience, attitudes, values and emotions impact effective collaboration under the DEC Approach.
2. Gain insight about our collaborative partners to decrease frustrations when utilizing the DEC Approach.
3. Understand how utilizing collaboration leads to more informed decisions and increased likelihood of better outcomes on behalf of drug endangered children and their families under the DEC Approach.
4. Be able to implement changes in identification of children, mandatory reporting, and evidence and information collection in our respective practices on behalf of drug endangered children.

Local DEC Alliance Development – Sustaining the DEC Approach

National DEC’s Local DEC Development training teaches law enforcement, child welfare and their professional colleagues and community partners about the benefits of forming local DEC alliances that formalize working relationships between the professionals who are involved with drug endangered children and their families. The training focuses on providing local practitioners with the proven specific steps and techniques to establish a formal drug endangered children alliance.

National DEC’s experienced trainers lead discussions and activities with the participants about who should be at the table to help form a local DEC alliance, about the challenges of collaboration and sustaining that collaboration, and about the benefits of changing practices and procedures on an on-going basis to benefit drug endangered children. The training assists disciplines in discussing as well as developing protocols and MOU’s to assist in institutionalize DEC efforts and responses within each community. This material in this very practical training is based on the experiences of successful local DEC alliances in various jurisdictions across the country, including tribal communities.

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Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the benefits of establishing local drug endangered children alliances to formalize working relationships between professionals.
2. Learn steps and techniques for establishing a local DEC alliance.
3. Gain insight about specific challenges within the communities around collaboration and how to address these challenges.
4. Review and discuss sample MOU's and protocols to understand how to institutionalize on-going changes in practice and develop responses to drug endangered children.
5. Engage in activities and exercises to discuss in depth, the institutionalization of DEC efforts and developing a local DEC alliance.