

Ice users' families to gain relief

By Matt Crossman

A pilot program designed to empower Sunbury residents worried about a loved one's drug or alcohol use will start later this month.

Sunbury Community Health (SCH) drug and alcohol team leader Jim Carlton said the free six-week program, launched in response to a large number of people crying out for help, would give families the knowledge and skills to better understand addiction and help break the cycle.

"Families often don't know what to do when their loved one is suffering from addiction," Mr Carlton said.

"This is a widespread issue; often families are yelling out for help but their needs are not prioritised within treatment services."

More than 70 people, including affected family members, attended a recent community forum focused on problems caused by the rising use of crystal methamphetamine [ice].

Mr Carlton said that with families at the risk of becoming isolated, Action for Recovery offered a "sense of relief that they are not alone".

"Often during crisis periods families feel they have to go into 'rescue' mode as they're unsure what else they can do," he said. "Families often feel powerless to change the

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- Jim Carlton

situation. The impacts can be devastating."

The program, run in partnership with Family Drug Help, will explore ways to improve relationships and cope with anxiety and stress.

"Family members can feel the impact of the addiction even more than the user," Mr Carlton said. "Often they have parental feelings, underlying grief and guilt, which

in turn leads to families going outside their normal boundaries and rules, and this in turn can contribute to the addiction.

"Parents and other family members will do anything to make sure the user is safe. This course will support them to think through the best course of action."

Up to 15 people will be part of the pilot course to be held from 6-8pm each Monday from September 28 at 12-28 Macedon Street. Bookings: 1300 660 068 or email arc@sharc.org.au

Substance users or family members needing immediate help can contact SCH to see a drug and alcohol counsellor. Phone 9744 4455.