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My son started using Cannabis at around 14 years of age – 11 years ago. Over the following 3-4 years his usage increased. He became moody, depressed, unmotivated, aggressive and out of control. At around 18 years of age he started using Amphetamines. During these few years he left and returned home many times, all for varying lengths of time – anywhere from 1 week – 3 or 4 weeks. I have lost count of the times he had and myself had rung the various rehabilitation clinics – only to be told there was a waiting time of up to 6 weeks. The reason I kept letting him home again was the lack of accommodation that was longer than a week or so. Also most times he came home on the proviso that he would seek help. On 2 separate occasions he did attend 2 separate clinics as an out patient. On both occasions he did receive counselling and medication in the form of sleeping tablets and/ or Valium. Both times, after a week or so, he would sell these drugs for Cannabis and/or amphetamines. This downward spiral continued for another two years or so. By this time he had become more aggressive, escalating in more than one episode of violence around my home. I was forced to take out a restraining order against him. This was one of the hardest things I have ever done. Following this, other family members intervened and eventually got him in to a rehabilitation clinic (after about 4 weeks). Initially this was reasonably successful. He was allowed “out” for periods of time and of course after a short period of time he started using again – therefore he had to leave. His 21st birthday came and went. He was using more and more. Still coming home frequently but each time not for long.

In late 2004 he came home – around 12-18 kg under weight. Very depressed and severe mood swings and paranoid. He was determined to stop using all drugs (except cigarettes_ which was reasonably successful for a few weeks. Once he had regained some strength and was beginning to feel better, of course he started using Cannabis again and Amphetamines eventually. This continued in a downward spiral for 18 months or so. In July 2006 there was yet another violent episode resulting in the police being called and taking him away – although not arrested (the violence was destruction of my property). I took out a second restraining order on him. This was the last time I have seen my son. After 2-3 weeks on the street he contacted my ex husband – his father. His father knew of a private rehabilitation clinic in Victoria. After a period of a few days he agreed (reluctantly) to go. This clinic is 1 ½ hours from Melbourne and about 12 kms from the nearest town. I believe the isolation was a big factor in my son’s eventual success. This clinic does not use drugs (cigarettes are allowed though) their success rate is 75%. The cost was in excess of \$20,000. My son was told he would need to be there for between 4 – 6 months. He stayed for 6 months, leaving in January of this year.

He was very fortunate that his father was in a position to pay for his treatment.

My son, I am told is doing very well. He is living at his fathers and currently undertaking various courses to gain skills to enter the workforce, and eventually his independence.

I have been attending Parent Support Group meeting for around three years. Going to ‘Group’ has been the single most and best coping strategy for me. Just knowing that every other parent attending knows what you are going through and understands gives/gave me the strength to keep going. One of the best things about our “Group” is the gentle but constant reminder to look after ourselves. My family have and are also very supportive of myself.

Thankyou for take the time and trouble to read my story.