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Anti Social Behaviour and Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Advice for Family Members and Carers of People with ABI

After sustaining an ABI, an individual may go on to develop antisocial behaviour. Examples of anti social behaviour include drug and alcohol abuse, stealing and violence. For some individuals this behaviour is the same as that displayed prior to the ABI, for some it is an exacerbation of previous behaviour and for others, this behaviour is new, occurring only since sustaining the ABI. An ABI can contribute towards a person's anti social behaviour, but is not the cause alone. There are many factors that contribute to this behaviour including boredom, problems with impulse control, frustration about changed abilities and opportunities, peer influence, and anger about the ABI and its life impact.

Anti social behaviour tends to represent a maladaptive attempt to meet a genuine social, emotional or practical need which, for a range of reasons, an individual is unable to meet in a more adaptive or appropriate way.

If a person with an ABI is participating in anti social behaviour it may be helpful to:

- Have a discussion with that person in order to gain a sense of their feelings and thoughts about their anti social behaviour. Determine if they wish to make changes with regard to their behaviour. If they do want to change, they are in a good position to participate in the planning of a program in order to do so.
- Identify the individual life goals of the person. Ask them what their life would look like if it was rewarding and enjoyable and recognise that antisocial behaviour would play no part in this life. It is helpful to think broadly about this; understand their vocational goals, social goals and personal goals, in addition to resolving any grievances or issues that may impact on attaining these goals. Once these are understood, strategies to assist the individual to work towards these goals can be identified.
- Rather than focusing on taking things away from the person, try to focus on adding positive things. Examples of this may be to try to

- connect the person with peers who are a positive influence or to find enjoyable activities in which the person can participate.
- Understand how the anti social behaviour benefits the person and try to identify less destructive ways that enable them to fulfil their needs.
 - When discussing behaviour with the person, clearly identify which of the behaviours are of concern and the negative impact of these behaviours on other people. It is also important for the individual to understand the potential consequences of continuing to behave in this way.
 - Give the person opportunities to express and deal with the ways the ABI has affected their life.
 - Find ways to avoid boredom.
 - If the person has the cognitive ability to do so, it is helpful for them to understand their patterns of behaviour, the thinking patterns that precede the behaviour and identify the high risk situations that tend to lead to their anti social behaviour. This will assist the person to have a greater opportunity to intervene in relation to their own behaviour and as such, manage it effectively. This is particularly important for people with impulse control difficulties.
 - Identify the high risk situations, i.e. times and places that anti social behaviour may occur, so that they can be avoided or better managed.

This information sheet has been prepared by Life Supports Counselling Service. Life Supports Counselling Service provides specialist counselling for people affected by Acquired Brain Injury. If you would like to discuss your situation with a counsellor, please feel free to contact our office on **1300 73 50 30**.

For more information sheets on topics related to acquired brain injury please see www.lifesupports.com.au/acquired_brain_injury.htm