

EMR Family Reconciliation Best Practice Group
Thursday 24th May 2007
YSAS

Attendance:

Nick Meumann	Monash Youth and Family Services
Carla Di Stefano	FAN
Helen Hunt	Harrisons Community Services
Catherine Eldrigde	REFS
Jacqui Sundbery	YSAS Reconnect
Liam Fitzgerald	YSAS Reconnect (student)
Ranee Cornell	FRMP

Apologies: Rhianna Perkin (received post distribution of minutes)

Introductions:

Nick Meumann - new to the network. He is a new worker at MYFS with a range of programs for 10-25 YO's

Carla - FAN (Homeless service for 15 - 25 YO). Because support many young families, also have children's programs together with volunteer/mentor courses, cooking courses. YHAP 2 initiative with Anchor is supporting better housing outcomes in private rental. Support for those who are ready by building relationships with rental agencies and support for those who are not yet ready for rental market.

Liam and Jacqui - YSAS Reconnect. Client group are 12-18Yos at risk of homelessness with D&A issues. Education, training and employment.

Programs:

- "Breaking Through": interactive drama, which is derived from "Theatre of the Oppressed". Wants to keep this running consistently.
- Best Plus - family and sibling program for YP with D &A issues.

Helen - Family Mediator at Harrisons. Has been a staff team of 4, currently operating with just Helen. Uniting Families has grown rapidly in last 12-18 months, particularly in aged care. Conducts Art program open to anyone and are soon to have an exhibition. Call intake at Harrisons for more info. Currently restructuring with a new youth strategy Frontdoor. Aiming to offer a range of services in one service rather than referring out. This has been driven by client needs.

Catherine - REFS - New intake worker. A number of family/parenting programs are currently running at REFS.

Presentation - Helen Landau - Meridian - "Breaking the Cycle"

Meridian operates with multiple funding for multiple age groups. Meridian identified that there was a need to do work with YP who were violent towards parents/siblings, particularly those who did not recognise that there was a problem. Often YP displayed more authority/power than parents, with Mum's unable to challenge the reversed authority.

Observed 2 clusters:

- Mothers who see it as their problem/fault i.e. Husband was violent to me, D&A, ADHD, Aspergers (flooding of Aspergers diagnoses currently being observed). Have developed theories on current cultures impact on socialisation. Eg. devalued traditional (nurturing etc....) contributions of women together with men wanting more to be involved with children. New pressures.
- Parents view violence as being all fault with YP - "They were just born like that"

Groups have been found to be a very successful response and provided. Great insight into issues has been generated group work also.

First group was just boys (where physical violence is often occurring), however the reality that young women can often be as violent in less physical ways.

Now have groups for mothers and fathers (who are struggling as well).

8 week program - beginning with brief disclosure from participants, by middle focusing on parent and the impact that their parenting is having on the situation towards how they can be part of the solution. Eg. by teaching reflective listening, which doesn't parrot, but gets underneath. Working through skills of not personalising, providing space, not reacting. Eg. "It seems that something happened at school today, do you want to talk about it?" NEVER REFLECTING/EXTERNALISING VIOLENCE.

Safety issues always come first so often work on developing safety plans.

When focus in on a YP who is being violent towards parents, often violence to a sibling is overlooked.

Encouraging discussions with police around Intervention Orders, but reinforce that this should only be undertaken if they are prepared to follow through.

Outcomes: Change is not always achieved at end of 8 sessions. In many circumstances violence stopped but many become depressed about loss of connection and relationship. For some it outcomes were about reconnection. For some there was

enough reduction of violence but fear was still being tolerated because the parent was not prepared to do more.

Currently running 2 sessions/year.

Where from here: Program "Expect Respect in Schools" - not refunded, however was found to be very successful.

A **training program** for "Breaking the Cycle" has been developed and can be done in 2-days depending on background knowledge of group.

High levels of adolescent DV is currently being recorded with 30-40% of callouts for DV for police in some areas being for adolescent to parent.

3. Discussion of various Practice Issues

New Childrens and Family Act

Child First process will soon be rolled out.

4. Topics for Next Meeting

Helen Hunt was invited and has accepted to present on the mediation program which operates at Harrisons.

Next Meeting:

Thursday 30th August, 9:30 - 11:00

Venue: Monash Youth and Family Services

14 Bogong Ave, Glen Waverly