



FAMILY RECONCILIATION AND MEDIATION PROGRAM

NOTES FROM CONSULTATION WITH WESTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

28th June 2005

1. Welcome

Introduction and role in agency

What do you want from today?

2. History of the FRMP and summary of Youth Homelessness Action Plan (YHAP) First Stage Report, & Project i Research

3. Introduction of the Family Reconciliation and Mediation Program (FRMP)

FRMP Team and their roles

- Mandy Baxter – Manager
- Scott Dutton – Family Mediator & contact person for brokerage
- Yasmin Thomas – Senior Community Development Worker
- Linda Schwan – Community Development Worker

Overview of 3 Program objectives:

- a) To support the homelessness sector to assist young people, where possible and appropriate, to return home or to reconcile with family / significant others. Reconciliation options include:
 - Semi therapeutic interventions, such as counseling to assist a young person to 'make sense of' their experience of homelessness and family breakdown'.
 - These services will be brokered from existing local services and accredited private practitioners where possible.
 - Up to 10 sessions / \$150 per session
- b) To provide a front-end family mediation service. Within metropolitan Melbourne, Scott Dutton will provide this service. In rural Victoria, local services will be utilised, or where gaps in service provision exist, services will be brokered-in.
- c) To establish pilot programs to support those young people who have experienced episodes of chronic / longer- term homelessness. This objective relates to the first two objectives, and will come from the first year's learnings.

4. Brainstorming Reconciliation - What is reconciliation?

- Implies that at some stage there has been a breakdown in relationship
- Process of getting together to discuss breakdown
- Implies step by step procedure
- Understanding issue – either within self or with others
- Spectrum of possibilities for change is determined by: support, attitude toward reconciliation with all parties, understanding of / reflection on what has happened for them as well as others, risk factors, openness to change, level of breakdown that occurred, resources available, past experiences, cognitive developmental stage of young person and their parents,
- Connection to others outside the family – sense of belonging to
- Stage of acceptance with change, and comfort with, learning to live with, not struggling with
- Process of learning how to deal with others that affects everybody
- Capacity to analyze the situation, make it work in the way that young people wants and not get angry
- Commitment to process

5. What reconciliation interventions do you / your agency practice when working with clients?

- Percentage of reconciliation work currently done – very little, 50, 90, 60-70, 30, 30, very little, 30, done often but possibly not conscious of it, 20 but dependent on client
- Asking young person to demonstrate links with family in assessment process
- Secondary consults
- Case work
- Mediation
- Outreach – at home, school
- Informal counseling
- Talk to parents about behaviors
- Gathering information
- Utilizing intergenerational contact - eg: via recent parenting of client, Christmas
- Preparing safety plan with clients – eg: sleep overs with mum and dad, respite
- Crisis – eg: getting arrented
- Cultural considerations
- Short term program (6 weeks) – refer on to other agencies eg: Reconnect
- Listening to clients, finding clues in what they are saying

6. Constraints to reconciliation practices?

- Resources – tools and what you can do in your working week
- Time constraint
- No capacity for follow up
- Privacy issues – talking with mum and dad
- Waiting lists for family reconciliation are long
- Changes in family structure eg: partners involved – can be yp, or parents
- Cultural considerations
- Short term program (6 weeks) – refer on to other agencies eg: Reconnect

- Inappropriate to have support role with yp, then move on to work with family. Not neutral
- Homelessness is the primary need of client, and funded role of SAAP support worker. Important to prioritize need

7. Mediation

Definition displayed on overhead for comment

8. Brokerage

- Mediation, reconciliation, discretionary funding
- 10 sessions, up to \$150 per session
- Not counseling between partners, but rather young person and their family. Can be linked to intergenerational patterns that exist between young person and how they were parented

➤ **Example of discretionary funding**

A rural youth refuge identified that they have access to a bush house, to be utilized by young people and their families working toward family reconciliation. Specialists, including family mediators, family therapists and individual counselors visit the young person and their family whilst staying at the house. The only cost that cannot be financed over these couple of days is food for the young person and their family. FRMP agrees that as the family are engaging in a reconciliation process, discretionary funds may be accessed to cover these costs.

➤ **Examples of successful reconciliation applications**

Example 1

- **Service accessing brokerage:** Youth Refuge
- **Funding requested:** Reconciliation – counseling
- **Details of young person:** 17 year old male living in a refuge. Requesting individual counseling around issues of grief and loss, and assistance with relationship with father and stepmother.
- **Gaps in services:** No services available
- **Own provider / assistance:** Worker has own contact to provide counselling
- **Funds used for:** Assessment & then family counselling with specialist
- **Sessions requested:** 10 (3 for assessment)
- **Cost:** \$150 / session

Example 2

- **Service accessing brokerage:** Youth Refuge
- **Funding requested:** Reconciliation – counseling
- **Details of young person:** 16 year old female living in a refuge. Requesting individual counseling to assist with dealing with issues related to her family, including trauma, protective services involvement, relationships with her siblings, refugee & CLD considerations.
- **Gaps in services:** No services currently available
- **Own provider / assistance:** Worker has own contact to provide counselling
- **Funds used for:** Individual and family counselling
- **Sessions requested:** 10
- **Cost:** \$150 / session

Example 3

- **Service accessing brokerage:** SAAP service
- **Funding requested:** Reconciliation – counseling
- **Details of young person:** 22 year old male supported by SAAP. Wanting to reconcile with family and siblings. Individual counseling requested, possibly followed by request for family mediation.
- **Gaps in services:** There are services but long waiting lists.
- **Own provider / assistance:** Worker has own contact – young person has had contact with the counsellor in the past.
- **Funds used for:** Family counselling
- **Sessions requested:** 10
- **Cost:** \$80 / session

9. How can you / your agency use this money to maintain or improve what you are currently doing with particular clients?

- Major anger management issues, preventing functional relationship with family. Anger management courses booked up and generally for older men. Need counselors that can touch on anger management.
- Crisis services – identifying and linking in better with longer-term support services. Links by crisis service can be via outreach.
- Young woman engaging in reconciliation with pain of breakdown but not necessarily meet with family. Work on self and beginning to understand what happened.

Questions

- *How is the FRMP assessing appropriate counselors?*

FRMP are building up database of counselors that are appropriate for working with client group. Scott is assessing counselors via submission of CV and discussions over phone.

- Does young person need to know that family reconciliation needs to be outcome of counseling?
No provided it is a process of self-reconciliation. However, a support worker can identify that young person may benefit, in that the intervention might assist with a family reconciliation process in the future.
- Is funding one-off?
No. There is potential for a young person to receive more than one intervention, however, this needs to be discussed with the FRMP brokerage contact before proceeding.
- Scenario: The problem of beginning counseling session it opens up a can of worms and can be full-on, and potentially a safety issue. There is then often an expectation that young person would have to catch public transport home.
- Question: Can FRMP fund transport for someone to assist a young person in this vulnerable state?
The purpose of discretionary funds is to support the process of reconciliation/mediation, so as long as you can demonstrate the process of reconciliation/mediation is occurring, FRMP may consider this issue.
- Can FRMP assist in providing respite for a young person and their parent?
FRMP recently supported a young person needing time together with her mum to work things through. This respite was provided in a house at Healesville, including food. The funding barrier was the transport.
FRMP can fund respite for young people and their families as long as it can be demonstrated reconciliation/mediation is occurring.

10. Training

Registered Training Organization will provide training. Aim is to provide a consolidated training package within a young person and family centered approach.

Training Needs

- Child abuse and consequences for young people
- Working with young people within the context of their family
- Mental Health – what do I do if my mum and sister have bi-polar
- Drug and Alcohol

11. Website

All information available online

12. Publicity Material

Brochures, stickers, posters and fridge magnets for young people will be available soon.

13. Closing

A flyer aimed at young people is attached to the FRMP literature provided today. Please respond to Linda with any comments on how to improve this document. Parts of this information will be included in the publicity material mentioned above.

