



FRMP CONSULTATION WITH BAIRNSDALE **28th JULY 2005**

1. Welcome

Introduction and role in agency

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 learning.

4. BRAINSTORMING RECONCILIATION - What is reconciliation?

- Opportunity to redefine roles in the family

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

- Challenge beliefs and values about all of it; everyday processes with clients
- Refer to Reconnect and Links Programs
- Talk about family relationships – acknowledge that living at home is not a reasonable prospect for some clients
- Access to counselors, mediators, psychologists (private practitioners) and youth workers
- Access to victims of crime monies to fund counseling
- Outreach. Discussions with young people re family often works better outside the office / structured environment, eg; walk on the beach
- Make a point that we work for you not your parents (refuge worker)

6. Constraints or challenges to reconciliation practices?

- It is difficult and challenging working with internal family issues. A majority of young people who are clients belong to dysfunctional families to begin with.
- Remaining neutral while working with young people and their families. Unintentionally, a worker may be seen as supporting one party more than the other
- In the women's refuge, both mum and her children are the client
- Distance is a huge issue – 2 distinct areas including cultures within this group alone, eg; Yarram and the Lakes
- Some workers stated they are very much stand-alone workers, working in isolation within a community. To compound this it is often difficult for workers to access services that are not local. For example, a lot of community services are located in Bairnsdale and not Lakes, so there is often a lot of driving required
- Referral – intervention
- Transport. School buses for young people and those with disabilities even more of a problem
- Willingness. Intake and assessment will identify the need for reconciliation, but client may not want to discuss or engage
- Waiting lists for counseling services are long (eg: CASA)
- Matching a client with appropriate practitioner
- Lack of privacy for clients within rural communities. People often know about one another's business – eg: "my mum knows them". This can be a barrier to some clients beginning a process like seeing a counselor.
- Koorie people will often go to a service in another area for confidentiality
- Getting clients to the counselor is really time consuming for workers – lots of driving

- Accessing Legal Aid for clients can be difficult in a rural area. Sometimes in cases of Domestic Violence, there is a conflict of interest with one solicitor working on everyone's cases
- Young people mandated to see a worker is an issue
- Have links to ACP but can't get the people
- Listening to a distressed parent either on phone or in the office can be uncomfortable, however, it has benefits in that workers see the other side of the story

7. 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
- 20 agencies have accessed money to-date
- Family therapy, mediation, counseling

Examples of successful reconciliation applications

Example 1

- **Service accessing brokerage:** Youth Refuge
- **Funding requested:** Reconciliation – individual 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 counseling*
- **Funds used for:** *Assessment & then family counseling with specialist*
- **Sessions requested:** *10 (3 for assessment)*
- **Cost:** *\$150 / session*

Example 2

- **Service accessing brokerage:** Youth Refuge
- **Funding requested:** Reconciliation – individual 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 counseling*
- **Funds used for:** *Individual and family counseling*
- **Sessions requested:** *10*
- **Cost:** *\$150 / session*

Examples 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.
- Costs of a translator to assist in counseling session
- Babysitting provided for the children of young parents attending counseling

Group discussion around how brokerage can be accessed

- It is better for FRMP to pay private practitioners directly, without SAAP agency becoming involved in invoicing process. Some rural agencies are auspiced by another agency, and the process of obtaining cheques is difficult
- Workers acknowledge that they need to explore internal staff as a resource, thus, use local mediators first before accessing FRMP brokerage
- Need to establish a list of mediators in the region. This will involve contacting services to discover what skills exist. Yasmin will assist in this process (see Action below)

Action

To support the delivery of family mediation as needed within Gippsland region. To do this it was identified that a skills audit of workers within the region needs to be completed first – this will provide an overview of who can and who is available to deliver mediation. The FRMP can then fund these mediations through brokerage. Yasmin will contact Wendy Gilbert and SAAP agencies from both the Morwell and Bairnsdale areas within the next fortnight and assist in establishing this list. Workers believe this will be a really useful resource.

8. Training Needs

- Formal mediation training
- Majority of this type of work is in the initial intervention, so training on how to engage with young people and determine needs appropriately in order to refer on would be useful
- Intensive training on a relevant topic
- Family DV training held in the area recently was excellent although quite intensive for one day (a number of services hosted it, eg; police, legal representatives, etc.)
- Needs to be local and not in the CBD of Melbourne. The expenses associated with travel, accommodation, and staff coverage are significant, and sometimes a barrier for workers attending training

- BRIT calendar currently offering a lot and more has recently become available. Workers need to prioritize and carefully select one as opposed to many – at times workers cancel going to one if something of more value arises, for instance.
- Nominal fee (eg: \$40-50) is a good idea and can induce workers attending once booked
- Regarding weekend training it depends on how much you need it – some workers would attend if they really see the benefits, however, others would not consider it

9. Website

All information available online

10. Publicity Material

- Stickers, posters, fridge magnets & a young person flyer are currently being developed
- A comprehensive Directory will be available on the FRMP website in the near future, detailing the location of: SAAP agencies, SAAP funded reconciliation workers, Reconnect workers, and practitioners such as counselors and psychologists

11. Closing summary and questions

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