



FRMP CONSULTATION WITH MORWELL
27th 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 learnings.

4. What is reconciliation?

- Improving relationships
- Working through problems together
- Reconnecting – making contact
- New & creative ways of relating / changing the way people relate – learn to co-exist and communicate differently
- Being aware of where young people are at – and respect their wishes – willing / readiness to participate in some form of reconciliation
- Causes – so much damage that young person does not want to go there
- Internal conflict, eg; work through guilt one is carrying
- Not counseling, we don't touch on that at all in this role, more so external stuff addressed

5. Percentage of Reconciliation work currently done?

- 30%. At some point everyone needs reconciliation – comes back to conflict from the past
- Nearly always a discussion with a family – if young person under 18 years of age our agency must make contact with family
- 30-40%. Reconciliation is a high topic for discussion and part of the assessment process. However, for some young people, reconciliation is not going to happen straight away. It is a goal for the future, and therefore, we provide support to go through that process. In the meantime, it is good to reduce other stressors in a young person's life in order for them to be able to deal with reconciliation
- Sometimes parents see us (workers) as interfering. It is part of the culture not to get involved
- It depends on the damage that's been done

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

- Contact extended families for support
- Refer on to youth agencies
- Make contact with family if young person is under 18 years old
- Focus on family goals – future goals
- Just being there, listening and giving young people options they did not know about previously – allowing young person the space to investigate their immediate future
- With some indigenous families we need to be careful with how we approach reconciliation – it is important to get the support of family
- D & A – balance issues by getting respite for young person
- Mental illness – assessment
- Maintain client confidentiality
- Use 'reframing' technique when talking with young people

7. Constraints to reconciliation practices?

- Time
- Caseloads – officially workers carry caseloads of 14 clients each. But in reality, due to the Open Door Policy, some workers carry 32 clients at any given time
- Being both an advocate for young person AND support person for the family. We question who is the client (young person or parent), and believe we can't be as effective if we have to swap roles. For example, supporting a young person and their parent/s simultaneously brings a conflict of interest (especially in country towns as everyone knows everyone)
- Traveling long distances to meet with clients, and their families
- Limitation of available services in the area
- Assisting a young person and their family if there are mental health issues
- When a young person has an established rapport and trust with the SAAP worker and only opens up to this worker, it can be difficult to refer young person to other support services. Sometimes the young person may only want to speak with the SAAP worker and not anyone else (eg; private practitioner, counselor)
- Past / negative experiences of counselors can prevent a young person from speaking out

8. Mediation

Definition displayed on overhead for comment

9. 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

Discussion around how brokerage can be accessed

Question

- Can brokerage be accessed for a 14 year old and their foster family within ACP? The client is a voluntary ACP client.

Yes

Question

- *Could a PP be booked to come to Yarram and potentially see 3 kids during this visit? Would the PP's travel fees be covered under discretionary costs?*

Yes, a PP could be based at an agency and see a block of clients on a particular day. The kilometers traveled by the PP would be added to their invoice, in addition to their hourly fee.

Question

- *Many rural agencies have no funds to be able to pay counselors in advance, or as invoices come in. Furthermore, for some workers, the additional administration role that would be involved in keeping up-to-date with invoices is a problem. Can FRMP pay the PP directly to remove this barrier?*

There are a couple of options regarding payment of PP. One option is for the SAAP agency to pay the counselor and then FRMP reimburses the SAAP agency. If this poses any difficulty for the SAAP agency or the PP then FRMP can either: pay the PP directly or; pay the SAAP agency in advance up to 3 sessions.

In terms of payment, we will need a tax invoice after the 3 sessions, which should include the following information:

- the date
- states that it is a tax invoice,
- your ABN
- it be made payable to: Melbourne Citymission – Family Reconciliation & Mediation Program,
- includes the cost/s and date of each session
- includes the total cost (including any GST if applicable)

The invoice can be paid by cheque or preferably paid by EFT.

10. Training Needs

- For training to be not all metro based – regional focus and broader range like offered in Melbourne
- A worker has completed Meditation A & B but their agency are not in a position to pay for a refresher course, so to use this money for this would help. In addition, to train another worker from another area / town and agency would be beneficial and support a co-mediation model
- A request for middle to advanced level (not too basic)
- Extra cost when attending training, eg; accommodation and providing coverage whilst at training is a huge barrier
- More intimate for staff if training is local. Training then also provides an opportunity for networking, especially for sole workers. Networking is an integral part of this work
- Meditation training – negotiation skills would be beneficial

11. Website

All information available online

12. 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

13. Closing summary and questions