



FRMP CONSULTATION WITH BENDIGO
24th AUGUST 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 reconciliation interventions do you / your agency practice when working with clients?

- Mediation
- Counseling (service based)
- Provision of respite
- Advocacy
- Programs and Group work promoting life skills and recreation

5. Constraints to reconciliation practices?

- Young people not engaging with current counseling services available. Young people not turning up for appointments. Counseling can be regarded by some young people as 'middle class'. Perhaps young people need more supportive and expressive programs?
- Many young people have had negative experiences of counseling and mediation. Or perhaps a young person has seen / been to all the counselors in the region.
- Supportive resources allowing a continuum of support
- Lack of safe and appropriate housing options. Reconciliation difficult if young person is not 'settled' in stable accommodation.
- Needing to address immediate needs prior to being ready for counseling - interventions to stabilize the situation first.

Action

Local and regional supports that are focused on value adding and capacity building were identified as an area for development required across services within the Bendigo area. Specifically, Cobaw Community Health Centre will be able to access the Community Development support of FRMP in any future areas of development (including program development) required. FRMP will be focusing heavily on community capacity building within regions, which will continue to develop as the Program matures.

Action

Yasmin will contact services within the region, the Regional Homeless Networker (Heather Holst) and DHS Advisor (Michelle Robertson) regarding the possible establishment of a Best Practice Network of Family Reconciliation and Mediation workers within the Loddon Mallee Region. This group may provide an opportunity for organizing a Best Practice Forum, identifying best practices amongst workers, interagency sharing of information and best practice, peer support, reflection and worker presentations, and the development of enhanced working relationships between Family Reconciliation and SAAP Support Workers within the Loddon Mallee region.

Action

To support the delivery of family mediation and reconciliation as needed within Loddon Mallee 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 and counseling. The FRMP can then fund these interventions through brokerage. Yasmin will contact Heather Holst, Michelle Robertson and SAAP agencies from the areas surrounding Bendigo and Mildura within the next fortnight and assist in establishing this list. Workers believe this will be a really useful resource.

6. Brokerage

- Mediation, reconciliation, discretionary funding
- 10 sessions, up to \$150 per session
- 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 discussions around how brokerage can be accessed

Question

- *As availability of appropriate housing is sometimes a barrier for young people engaging in family reconciliation interventions, can FRMP discretionary funding be used to purchase a caravan to accommodate young people?*

The FRMP Program acknowledges that there is difficulty of engaging in reconciliation interventions without access to appropriate housing. However, within the Program's interim guidelines, discretionary funding cannot be used for the purchase of housing stock. FRMP will pass this regionally specific concern on to the Department.

Question

- *Can FRMP discretionary funding be used to develop specific & relevant family reconciliation programs within SAAP agencies? An example raised was YP at high risk being engaged in a group program (hip hop) that has a therapeutic element that is also developmentally engaging.*

FRMP Team will obtain clarification.

Action

FRMP Team will obtain clarification in relation to whether discretionary funding can be used to develop specific and relevant family reconciliation programs within SAAP agencies.

Question

- *Can FRMP be available as a secondary consult?*

Yes. Scott Dutton and Angela Dupuche are available to all SAAP and THM services as secondary consultants, or point of contact if mediation / reconciliation clarifications are required. Contact can be made via (03) 8625 4479 or 0400 591 175

Question

- *If a SAAP agency provides a mediation service, but this mediation program is not funded by SAAP, can the agency apply for FRMP funding of these individual interventions with young people?*

Yes!

7. Training Needs

- How to talk about mediation and counseling with clients
- Mediation (especially follow up courses for those workers who have completed components A, B & C)
- Critical reflection
- Specialized group work
- Family practice

8. Website

All information regarding the FRMP Program (including brokerage application forms) available online

9. 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

10. Closing summary and questions

Action

Local and regional supports that are focused on value adding and capacity building were identified as an area for development required across services within the Bendigo area. Specifically, Cobaw Community Health Centre will be able to access the Community Development support of FRMP in any future areas of development (including program development) required. FRMP will be focusing heavily on community capacity building within regions, which will continue to develop as the Program matures.

Action

Yasmin will contact services within the region, the Regional Homeless Networker (Heather Holst) and DHS Advisor (Michelle Robertson) regarding the possible establishment of a Best Practice Network of Family Reconciliation and Mediation workers within the Loddon Mallee Region. This group may provide an opportunity for organizing a Best Practice Forum, identifying best practices amongst workers, interagency sharing of information and best practice, peer support, reflection and worker presentations, and the development of enhanced working relationships between Family Reconciliation and SAAP Support Workers within the Loddon Mallee region.

Action

To support the delivery of family mediation and reconciliation as needed within Loddon Mallee 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 and counseling. The FRMP can then fund these interventions through brokerage. Yasmin will contact Heather Holst, Michelle Robertson and SAAP agencies from the areas surrounding Bendigo and Mildura within the next fortnight and assist in establishing this list. Workers believe this will be a really useful resource.

Action

FRMP Team will obtain clarification in relation to whether discretionary funding can be used to develop specific and relevant family reconciliation programs within SAAP agencies.