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Abstract title:

CNAHS Family and Community Healing Program

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Area of focus:

Strategies to support child wellbeing

Abstract:

The CNAHS Family and Community Healing (FCH) Program was developed to address Aboriginal family violence in the Central Eastern and Western metropolitan region of Adelaide. The FCH Program comprises an inter-related and dynamic set of group activities for Aboriginal women, men and youth built around community engagement. The key focus of the Program is on family and community healing, to equip people with the skills for effective communication and conflict resolution. The FCH Program has been running for over 2 years, and has been formally evaluated through a participatory action research process.

Strengths of the FCH Program include evidence-based design, holistic approach, clinical focus, committed staff, inter-sectoral linkages, peer support, mentoring, and Aboriginal cultural focus. Strategic partnerships between health and human service sectors including creative use of funds and human resources as well as a strong long-term vision for the FCH Program in the context of wider Health plans for the region, have kept the FCH Program going despite the challenges of ongoing organisational restructure, insufficient staff and short term, restrictive funding.

Clients and workers are overwhelmingly unanimous in their support for the FCH Program, and their stories provide ample evidence of the beneficial impacts on Aboriginal clients, families and the community. The evaluation shows clearly that the FCH Program, while still in its infancy, is already meeting its objectives. There is also some scope for expansion and refinement in the future. The CNAHS FCH Program is clearly a successful model for family and community healing, and builds community and service capacity to support safe families. It must be recognised that healing takes time, often many years, and that the Program should therefore be supported in the long term.

Brief biographies:

Terry Stewart , Irene Wanganeen, Rosalie Fraser and Ida Love are the Aboriginal primary health care managers and workers who developed and implemented the CNAHS FCH Program. Alison Fielding and Pristine Roberts are clients of the Program's Women's group. Inge Kowanko and Charmaine Power are academics from Flinders University with expertise in Aboriginal health research and family violence; they evaluated the Program in partnership with the FCH Program team.