

Family Well Being Queensland

Overview

History

Family Well Being (FWB) is a nationally recognised program about empowerment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In Queensland, the Family Well Being project has played an important role in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional well being for a number of years. The program has been piloted in Far North Queensland at several sites including: Hopevale, Wujul Wujul and Yarrabah.

Aims and objectives

The FWB program, as adapted in north Queensland, is a two-step participatory action research (PAR) process that helps people explore the important issues affecting their daily lives, recognise their own strengths and resources, generate knowledge and take action to improve their situation, often in solidarity with external facilitators.

The program aims to empower participants and their families through training in analytical and problem solving skills in order to assume greater control and responsibility over the conditions which influence their lives.

Focus

This is a mental health promotion initiative. The FWB program is premised on the notion that all humans have basic physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs, the denial of any of which may result in difficulties including lack of resilience and associated inability to cope with everyday challenges of life.

Target group

The program is targeted broadly to parents and families.

Project structure

Lead agencies

The program has been piloted in Far North Queensland by:

- Apunipima Cape York Health Council (Hopevale and Wujul Wujul)
- Gurriny Yealamucka Health Services Aboriginal Corporation (Yarrabah), and
- Indigenous Youth and Family Support workforce of the Queensland Department of Communities, Far North Queensland region.

Partnerships

James Cook University and The University of Queensland have been project partners at all sites, with roles in evaluation and facilitator training.

Funding

The project has been mainly funded under the National Suicide Prevention Strategy. Additional funding has been provided by the Co-operative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health and the National Health and Medical Research Council to develop quantitative tools to measure outcomes in relation to cost effectiveness.

Project description

'Step One' of the program is about personal development and empowerment. It involves structured personal development workshops, in a safe group environment, which provide opportunities for participants to build trusting relationships, think about their individual needs and aspirations, and develop life skills, strategies and support mechanisms to help each other meet those needs. Some of the workshop topics

include leadership, relationships, conflict resolution, life journey, understanding emotions and understanding the meaning and purpose of crisis and ways of dealing with crisis.

'Step Two' is about applying new skills at the broader family and community level. It involves follow-up community development processes aimed at supporting participating groups to collectively address community issues identified from the personal development training. Community development processes initiated by the program have focused on: poor school attendance, child-care planning, exploring meaningful work for men, and addressing the shortage of housing.

Additional readings and resources

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Well Being.
Auseinetter, Issue 26, no.1, p.32. 2006.

http://www.auseinet.com/resources/auseinet/netter26/auseinetter_26.pdf

Evaluation of an Aboriginal Empowerment Program.

Tsey K. & Every A. 2000.

Co-operative research Centre for Aboriginal Health, Casuarina, NT.

<http://www.crcah.org.au/documents/OP1.pdf>

Adapting the Family Wellbeing Empowerment Program to the Needs of Remote Indigenous School Children.

Tsey K, Whiteside M, Daly B, Deemal A, Gibson T, Cadet-James, Y, Wilson A, Santhanam R & Haswell M. 2005.

ANZ Journal of Public Health, vol. 29, no.2, p 112-116.

<http://www.phaa.net.au/anzjph/anzjph/2005%20Edition/Vol%2029%20no2%20-%20April/112.htm> (abstract only)

The Family Wellbeing Empowerment Program: A tool for family violence prevention?

Proceedings of the CROCCS International Conference: Building Stronger Families, August 2004.

http://www.croccs.org.au/downloads/2004_conf_papers/040803MaryWhitesidePaperPUBLISH16.pdf

Evaluation

The program continues to be evaluated at all the sites using mainly qualitative information from participants about the changes they have experienced and the impact of such changes on their health and well being. Both the Hopevale and Yarrabah projects have been evaluated. Findings to date indicate that participation in structured empowerment initiatives developed for Indigenous settings can significantly enhance participants' feelings of control and responsibility for the conditions affecting their health and well being. Participants have demonstrated enhanced self worth, resilience, ability to reflect on the root causes of problems, problem solving ability, as well as an improved sense of hope that their situation can change.

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