

Family Relationship Services for Humanitarian Entrants Provider Forum 11-12 April 2007



Report

Prepared for: Department of Family and Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs
June 2007

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1 Introduction

This is the report of the second Family Relationship Services for Humanitarian Entrants (FRSHE) Provider Forum held in April 2007. The forum was held over two days in Melbourne, with a series of discussions and activities focused on the current challenges for pilot sites, the learnings to date, and the upcoming end-point to the overall evaluation.

The report captures the results of small group work as well as broader discussion, and facilitator presentations.

1.1 Background

In November 2006 FaCSIA hosted a national forum attended by providers of the FRSHE program. The forum was well attended, with several staff participating from each of the six services, from a number of State Offices, and from FaCSIA National Office.

Participants reported that they found the forum very valuable, and advised FaCSIA that another opportunity to come together would be of great benefit to the development of their programs and their individual practice.

The evaluation team from Urbis also attended the forum, and made a brief presentation and facilitated a short discussion about action research methods. Again, participants indicated they would benefit from a more detailed focus on this topic.

In April 2007 the second forum was held, bringing together managers and staff from the six FRSHE pilot sites. In all 18 people participated from services, along with two FaCSIA Officers representing the National and the Victorian offices.

1.2 The program

In the period before the forum the evaluation team had been providing coaching to the services in relation to the action research method promoted as part of the evaluation. The program was designed to address the key practice issues reported by services through these discussions, and to position the services to participate in the final requirements of the evaluation.

The timing and venue facilitated participants attendance at the 'African Think Tank' conference, and some FRSHE participants took advantage of this to attend selected sessions. In addition Urbis negotiated with the Conference Organisers for FRSHE Forum participants to attend a session of the conference focusing family violence in Sudanese families. Following the session the presenters held a separate session directly with FRSHE participants to discuss their work.

2 Learnings to date

The opening session of the forum was designed to draw on participants' key areas of interest, drawn from their action research focus. Four topics were proposed, and using the 'world café' method, each group had the opportunity to share their learning about:

1. Family work
2. Group work: from planning to running to evaluation
3. Getting in touch with communities
4. Collaborating with other agencies.

2.1 Family work

Family work was identified by participants as a critical approach to working effectively with humanitarian entrant (HE) families. This is in contrast to models of intervention which focus on the individual, and better recognises the impact of the wellbeing of the whole family on the health and wellbeing of each member.

Participants were invited to consider and share:

- the principles which underpin their work with families
- their learning in relation to practical elements of the work
- the challenges they had encountered in doing this work
- the ways in which they were achieving success.

Principles for family work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Flexibility – Uniqueness of each family – Be curious – Cultural courage – Client focused – Learn as you go – Self-determination – let the client decide what form of support they need
Locations/settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Flexible service delivery (different settings: schools, homes, office, etc.)
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Boundaries – Intergenerational and gender issues impact family work – Settlement issues impact relationships – Relationship issues impact settlement – Moving from a reactive way of working to reflecting on what we do and being responsive to broader, non crisis issues
Elements of the work to achieve success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Hierarchy of needs – Task-oriented (dealing with practical issues first) – Casework essential for engagement of families – Having all members in family counselling session – Settlement → family support – Break/bend the traditional 'rules' of the family to get in there and work with the family – Recognise roles of family members

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hearing from each other - Gender issues affect the way family work is delivered - Men are more difficult to engage but family work is more effective if men are engaged - 1:1 with men more effective as is a task-oriented/practical/hierarchy of needs focus - Have brokerage available → makes family work more effective, eg. buy in intensive services like speech therapy
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2.2 Group Work

All of the pilot programs include an element of group work. This again reflects the cultural context of the client group and importantly, the value to wellbeing of sharing with people who have had similar experiences.

The results of this discussion reflect the central challenges and lessons in this area of work, particularly the length of time required to really engage with clients and engage clients in a group and the resource demands on preparing and running a group well. However, a number of elements were identified that have proved effective in group work programs.

Principles for group work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be pro active in consulting and offering options to communities - Think outside the square - Slow paced - Expect change!
Locations/settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joining existing group - Went into a female elder's home to run the group - trust and comfort - Flexible service - home visits are important - Go where people are – eg. schools
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Logistics - Maintaining participation - People come late - do we wait or start? - Promoting group/project. Get more connected to community.
Elements of the work to achieve success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Narrative approach - Exchange within group - Involvement of Elders and community consultation - Focus on survival skills for healthy families - Limit number of weeks - Each week can be in isolation - Ownership of group rules - Creative responses - Cooking group – metaphor → ingredients for healthy family - Use of stages: Stage 1: Consulting target communities – what works; Stage 2: Planning; taking necessary actions (depending on consultation); learning - Tool of normalisation – not suffering alone. - Replicate groups so that those who couldn't get there

	<p>can come.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interactive Psycho education? - Early intervention programs into schools - emotional intelligence classes over 3 terms - Common issue put them together - ask their concerns? - Focus on family wellness; parents in charge - Narrative approach (story) to who clients are (wise men) - Slow and careful: Mothers and daughters to see what they want - Concrete, targeted - See the benefit - inspire them! - Clear theme - Lead times with reminders.
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2.3 Getting in touch with communities

A particular challenge for services, including specialist services such as Queensland Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma and the Migrant Resource Centres, is gaining access to newer communities to offer services. This is a critical lesson for future service provision, in that all new communities will require a planned, resourced, and well paced engagement process before the 'real work' can begin, and even then, engagement will take time. The methods being developed by services are innovative and proving effective. One particular example of a fortnightly column in a community language newspaper was proving a highly effective way of engaging in opportunistic conversation by the worker while out and about in their community, covering topics of family life, roles within families and other key issues.

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phone calls and initial contact - Lack of connection to draw on - Blurred boundaries for workers from small/new communities - Time and money expended with no obvious benefit seen in short – medium term
Elements of the work to achieve success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dinner invites for community elders - Drawing on existing knowledge and connections - Practical programs that show value of the service - Networking through any activity as well as existing networks – get involved, be seen - Invite 2-3 representatives – don't single out or assume you know who Elders are - Collaboration - partner with ethno-specific workers and with schools that children from the communities attend - Support work with a database of contacts – not relying on an individual's knowledge - Promote, promote, promote, eg. use radio as a medium of engagement and use ethnic press in promoting programs and activities, profiling self and issues

2.4 Collaborating with other agencies

The success of FRSHE services lies in part in achieving and maintaining effective relationships with a broad network of services. This discussion focused on the positive aspects of working collaboratively, and the ways in which services thought they were achieving this. Three elements were particularly noted as being rewarding to workers: the opportunity to raise awareness both broadly and on specific issues while networking; the skill sharing for FRSHE people and for those in the network who were willing to engage; and the ongoing positive relationships which are being built.

The challenges were also discussed, with the central issue being the misperception by mainstream services of what FRSHE services do. In the immediate sense this leads to inappropriate referrals and running around for clients. The key lesson for services is that time and resources need to be invested in engaging and staying engaged with the broad networks required to support families.

Positives	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information sharing - Invitation - Dovetailing with pre-existing service - Audience - Complementary services - Value-add combination - Flexibility with other providers - Community support - Novel, curiosity, new model, less competitiveness: PILOT - Agency visit - Opportunities, raising awareness* - Pilot and establish service - Up-skilling on both sides* - Working in partnership environment - Strong connections, plan agenda, organising activities - Training: cross-cultural. - Networking - Improved service - Building ongoing relationships* - Developing continuous - Identification of unique services ie tutoring - Monthly agency visits – drip feed - Refresher annually key services - Centrelink as hub 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connecting with other providers - How/when to collaborate - Staff turnover!! - Lack of experience and awareness for new staff - Differences in service provision - Time per client - Specialist needs - Misperception by the mainstream - objectives of service not clearly understood by mainstream ie “crisis service”* - Staff turn-over restart/reskill/inform* - Constant – time consuming*? - Appropriate referrals – overstretched services - A shared client having multiple workers in another agency with no coordination.
	<p>* = Significant learning</p>

3 From learning to advice

This session focused on translating the services learnings into advice that will help mainstream family relationship services to work with humanitarian entrant families. Working in three small groups the task was to design a one day training session for mainstream FRSP workers. This method was a way of capturing the participant's views of the key skills and knowledge central to doing their work well.

Investing time in engaging with community elders over time, for example attending events and showing interest in matters other than your particular program, and gathering and building on ideas from communities are all important. A key realisation is that with these families, the essential ingredient of trust was most likely to be achieved through first offering practical help. Only once this trust has been established can any more therapeutic work be offered.

The single most identified 'pre condition' to being effective in cross cultural work was cultural competence - achieved, in part, through cross cultural training, which includes being aware of one's own culture and how this is interpreted by clients. One of the challenges for participants in this exercise, however, was breaking down what exactly is involved in 'cross-cultural training'. Ultimately two levels were identified - the general point of educating people that theirs is not the only frame of reference, as well as ethno-specific knowledge and skill in supporting refugees.

In developing programs and approaches, the resource considerations that services encourage others to consider include having a cross-cultural consultant on the staff team, as well as people with group and individual skills. Knowing who the Elders are in each community is critical, enlisting their help and drawing on the pre-existing structures within communities are all ways of building relationships that become entry points to each community.

3.1 Collated ideas for a training program

Outcomes	<p>Challenge/change values and traditional thinking about HE families and new communities in general</p> <p>Dispel myths and assumptions about different cultures</p> <p>Develop FRSHE specific skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge - Differences - Communication (micro skills)
Approach	<p>Use knowledgeable and skilled workers – workers suitably qualified, aware of issues and being open to new values and beliefs</p> <p>Experiential exercises</p> <p>Start by giving instructions in a non-familiar language</p> <p>Actual stories, cultural immersion</p> <p>Awareness of gender sensitivities</p>
Skills	<p>Establishing trust in small community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Link - Connection and elder or credible person - Introduction - Other agencies, family, friends. <p>Using ethno-specific communication techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflective listening - Summarising <p>Developing specific language for each group</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Metaphors - Labels/titles - Complementing service provision and environment <p>Logistics of service provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Venue accessibility - Timing <p>Applying general counselling skills with HE families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflective listening - Summarising <p>Using culturally relevant metaphors</p> <p>Using culturally appropriate language to deliver information to communities.</p>
Knowledge	<p>Knowledge of impact of torture and trauma</p> <p>Impacts and stressors for individuals and families</p> <p>Available services to support clients (settlement services)</p> <p>Understanding developmental stages and how these have been affected by refugee experience</p> <p>Diverse refugee experience – ie in camps, fleeing</p> <p>Knowledge about differences; using ethno-specific communication techniques</p> <p>Support structure for HEs, eg. Bilingual workers, community leaders</p> <p>Traditional values, family structure, roles, conditions they came from, ideas of who they are</p> <p>Understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - norms, definition of family, collective vs. individual, roles, decision-making, fluidity of cultures, - complexity of issues - re-settlement experience - within group differences – subgroups → influenced by education, social status - Languages spoken, educational backgrounds, Religions - Visas - Settlement needs and issues and other specialist settlement services.

3.2 Building on the skill base

Through the group work sessions it was evident that a great deal of the effective work with HE clients is drawing on existing good practice in any helping relationship. For example there are the usual sets of micro skills required to engage, assess, understand perspective, build alliance, and provide support. Pilot sites identified the following list of skills and knowledge they utilise to do their work, and the supports they draw on from their agencies.

Skills and attributes of workers	Knowledge/approach	Agency support
Patience Flexibility Curiosity Working with interpreters Appreciation for a range of world views Using one's "gut instincts" Casework skills Handling "chaos".	Reflective practice Entering into the "world" of clients Awareness of self-care needs Awareness of different models of counselling and group work Holistic approach Know your boundaries and limitations Creatively working with families and groups.	Asking for supervision, support when needed Realistic about expectations of goals and progress Being realistic about objectives Tapping into other resources.

4 Programs

In addition to drawing on existing methods of engagement and program design, pilot sites have developed and refined their approaches in response to the particular characteristics of the client groups.

The pilot sites identified the following approaches in a session focused on the programs or components of programs they would consider recommending to other services working with humanitarian entrant families:

- Teaching rights and responsibilities to men and women together
- Training the leaders of the groups – leadership training
- Taking on the really difficult issues of domestic violence and child safety
- Parenting
- Gender specific programs
- Language specific programs
- Interpreting western values and how they impact on humanitarian entrants and then maintaining dialogue regarding this issue.

Specific programs that have been developed by FRSHE services include:

- Family Wellness
- Family Around the Fire Discussion
- Parenting Across Cultures
- Healthy Relationships

5 Working within and across cultures

A discussion session was led by the facilitators, and included a short presentation by Joanna Zubrzycki. These are the notes from the presentation.

In order to work within and across cultures, workers need to incorporate an understanding of their own cultural identity and how this interacts with their practice. An acknowledgement of the influence of the dominant “white” culture on agency policies, procedures and expectations of workers, clients and communities and what this means in practice is an important area for consideration.

Research (Zubrzycki, 2004, 2006) conducted with Australian social workers from different cultural backgrounds indicates that:

The self is a powerful influence on practice

Personal identity (gender, cultural identity, class) family history, personal experiences of parenting, socialization, educational background, experiences of migration etc. are all factors that can influence different aspects of practice including:

- motivation to work with people from same or different cultural groups;
- how this work is experienced by the worker; (impact on the worker)
- relationships with clients/communities;
- relationships with co-workers.

For workers from CALD backgrounds there appeared to be more dilemmas about how the self is used in practice. They are more conscious of their “different” cultural identity and this was often expressed as:

- Being an “expert” on their own culture. This can be experienced as affirming (clear area of knowing and competence), daunting (worker is aware of the diversity of cultural experiences including their own), distancing (worker preferred to work with others so that they were not compromised personally or professionally);
- The expert label and expectation at times means that CALD workers can find it hard to acknowledge uncertainty and the need for professional development in their practice;
- Feeling affirmed meant that workers could contribute meaningfully in the development of their practice and the agency’s services. However this could also mean locating themselves at the forefront of advocating for agency change where the worker identifies practices that are not culturally appropriate;
- It can be important for CALD workers to work with a range of client and community groups so that they are not restricted in the development of their experience and skills.

Personal knowledge and experiences combine with professional knowledge to inform practice.

- Can be difficult to discern which areas of knowledge are used and are effective at any one time;
- The combination of different forms of knowledge is sometimes discussed openly with co-workers and/or clients. This can take the form of self-disclosure where the worker (consciously or unconsciously) shares their personal experiences in practice with their client group;
- Important for workers to be aware of (through supervision, reflection) and to acknowledge what areas of knowledge they are using in practice. This can inform areas of professional development that need to be developed and challenged;

- Application of personal knowledge in practice, can lead to increased frustration for the worker as the client/community utilize the knowledge in ways that are unexpected or contrary to the worker's personal experiences e.g knowledge about parenting.

Personal and professional boundary issues for bicultural workers

Working with communities with whom workers share a cultural identity can lead to the following challenges in relation to maintaining clear personal and professional boundaries:

- Communities can expect the worker to be constantly available to them;
- The need to be available can be linked to expectations that the worker can provide a comprehensive service, beyond workers role, knowledge and skills;
- Community may not want a worker from the same cultural background to work with them – due to issues of shame, privacy etc;
- Can be difficult for a worker to maintain a healthy distance from their work as they confront on a regular basis the active use of self, through the expectations of others about their “expertise” and the community’s ownership of their work;
- The workers can also feel like they are constantly ‘fighting for’ their community against different aspects of the dominant service delivery culture and this can be very wearing, daunting and complex.

Self care when working within and across cultures can include:

- Finding appropriate forums – peer, group or individual supervision so that practice issues can be shared and developed;
- Engaging in reflective practice which can facilitate the development of some insight about the areas of practice that are particularly challenging as well as the breakthroughs and moments of creativity;
- Participation in ongoing professional education about the diversity of cultures;
- Discussions with the community so that knowledge and practices can be collaboratively developed;
- Gaining support/network with different workers in agencies about areas of change that are being identified by workers and communities.

Supportive cross-cultural workforce retention and recruitment practices:

- Organisations which provide more learning and development opportunities tend to have greater levels of staff retention;
- Organisations which provide adequate supervision, regular staff meetings, involvement in decision making and greater support, tend to have higher levels of staff retention;

6 Conclusion

Services reported that the forums have been a valuable support to developing their models, sharing learning and having the opportunity to reflect on what they are doing in their own practice.

Notwithstanding that the primary focus of this forum was on practice issues and learning, with an emphasis on the transferability of this learning to other settings, eg. generalist FRSP providers, there was an important 'higher level' thread running through many of the discussions. This pertained to the timeliness of relationship support services to humanitarian entrant families.

Prevailing wisdom generally has it that until 'settlement' issues are addressed (housing, income, work, language, school etc) families would not be open to, or indeed need, family support or family relationship support. On this basis, the pathway for families was thought to be through settlement support, followed in a linear fashion to family relationship services, if required.

Underpinning the discussions at this forum seemed to be the question "are we coming in too late?", and whether there is in fact a place for 'early intervention' as part and parcel of the settlement support. Now that the risks for particular communities are better understood, eg. the rates of family break down post arrival, a well designed education and support program would seem a valid approach.

The forum did not allow for the broad testing of this concept, and it is one the evaluators will take forward into the evaluation discussions.

Appendices

Attendees

Participant	Organisation	Days
Roxarne Paton	FaCSIA – National Office staff	Both
Nestor Zamora	FaCSIA – Victorian State Office staff	Both
Fiona McDonald Garry Hurst	Relationship Australia WA ASeTTS	Both
Jill Parris Max Broadway	Brotherhood of St Laurence	Both
Sally Regan Stephanie Vrionis Winston Chee Saturnino Onyala Dubravko (Woody) Jurkovic	South East Region Migrant Resource Centre Migrant Information Centre	Both
Abeda Iqbal Isho Georges Satarala Said Nasren Nasrat Diing Bul	Relationships Australia NSW Auburn Migrant Resource Centre Baulkham Hills Holroyd Parramatta Migrant Resource Centre	Both
Ross Predic Jennifer Rahme	Anglicare NSW	Both
Jeff Power Constantin Mukendi Magdalena Kuyang	Queensland Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma	Day 1

Program

Facilitators: Claire Grealy, Alison Wallace and Joanna Zubrzycki

Day one: Wednesday 11th April 2007

9.45am	Tea and coffee available	Purpose and approach to session
10.00am	Welcome and introductions	Roxanne Paton FaCSIA
10.15 – 12.30pm Session one	Approaches we are using and the learnings so far: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting in touch with communities - Collaborative work with other agencies - Group work: from planning to running to evaluation - Family work 	Using the world café method of rotating through discussion topics, participants will focus on learning to date about each phase of their work with communities, families and individuals.
12.30-1.00	Lunch	
1.00 – 2.00pm Session two	From learning to advice: what have we learnt that will help mainstream family relationship services work with humanitarian entrant families?	Reviewing the learnings from the previous session, this session will begin to focus participants on their role in developing advice for mainstream family relationship services.
2.00 – 2.15pm	Afternoon tea	
2.15 – 2.45pm Session three	Responsibilities and realities of being a pilot site: what's it been like for us?	The purpose of this session is to reflect on the experience of being a pilot site in this initiative
2.45 – 3.45pm	Working within and across cultures, with a focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - self care for workers - negotiating realistic boundaries with communities and with services 	Joanna will bring some of her research to the discussion, and then explore with participants their experience and learning of working within and across cultural contexts.
3.45pm	Close day one of Forum	
4.00pm	African Resettlement in Australia 2007: Conference Cultural Festival	

Day two: Thursday 12th April 2007

9.45am	Tea and coffee available	Purpose and approach to session
10.00am	Welcome and Introductions	
10.15 – 12.00pm Session four (include brief morning tea)	Action Research: working session on AR questions, progress on cycles, and recording the learning	Participants will be working on their site's AR questions, developing further where required, and documenting their learning with support of the evaluation team
12.00-12.30	Lunch	
12.30 – 1.15pm Session five	Service development from here: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - briefing our colleagues - strengthening our model - strengthening partner agency relationships - connecting with other pilot sites. 	This is a reflective session where participants will consider what they have learnt over the two days and what they will be taking back to their service, team and community.
1.15pm	Walk to Conference session	
1.30 – 3.00pm	Conference Session: Family Violence	Participants have been invited to attend this session of the Conference . It is an interactive panel session.
3.00 – 3.30pm	Discussion with Maria Dimopoulos and Samia Baho (Conference session presenters)	The session facilitators will meet with FRSHE participants to discuss the session.