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Conference Abstract

Breaking the cycle of poverty - service integration facilitates employment, education and social participation outcomes for long term unemployed families

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Abstract

Introduction: This session will outline the critical success factors that underpin improved service integration which enhanced employment, social participation and education outcomes for long term unemployed families. These factors are based on the findings from the 2010 – 2013 evaluation of the Goodna Family Centred Employment Program (FCEP) that was conducted by ConNetica. This innovative employment program, which was an initiative of the Rudd/Gillard government, was overseen by the Social Inclusion Board. The program provided services to some of Australia's most disadvantaged individuals. The results were outstanding.

Target Audience: The program targeted long term unemployed families who lived in the 4300 or 4301 postcode, were receiving Centrelink payments, had no more than four weeks earnings in the previous 12 months, had children under the age of 16 years and had voluntarily agreed to participate in the FCEP.

The complex range of barriers experienced by program participants included mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, homelessness, sexual abuse, physical abuse, acute financial pressures, incarceration, learning difficulties, lack of formal qualifications, social isolation and transport difficulties. A total of 150 families chose to join the program and almost 230 service providers were involved in the provision of services to these clients.

Program Overview: Participation was limited to 150 families and engagement in the program was voluntary. FCEP provided a holistic continuum of support to families (a total of 529 individuals), predicated on building a relationship with the family, assessing their type and level of need and supporting them to have these needs met. Two significant aspects of program included varying levels of engagement and the spectrum of interventions available through local services. FCEP provided numerous options to families through referral to appropriate services, brokerage and advocacy.

The Goodna FCEP team was multidisciplinary and included employment case managers, early childhood expert, case managers, a community and service engagement officer and education mentor. All team members used a strength based approach to case management and worked closely with one another to ensure provided services met clients' goals and were integrated and complimentary. In addition, training and networking meetings were arranged to strengthen

partnerships and increase cross-sectoral workforce capability in a range of areas relevant to clients' needs.

Evaluation Techniques: ConNetica used an action learning approach to the evaluation, which ensured that the findings throughout the program were continually shared with key stakeholders to facilitate ongoing improvements. Innovative survey tools were developed and used to assess and track participants' stages of change and readiness to seek employment, measures of social inclusion, satisfaction with the program design and resilience. Survey tools were also developed to track service providers' engagement in service collaboration and integration initiatives. Desk top audits of relevant documents and performance metric along with interviews with clients, service providers, team members and other key stakeholders were also conducted.

Program Highlights: Partnerships between services were strengthened, clients received more integrated and holistic services and education targets were exceeded. Individual participants experienced significant improvements in their resilience and well being and were more confident and capable to achieve their personal goals in relation to education, employment and social participation.

Many shared that the program had transformed their lives.

Keywords

poverty; mental illness; long term unemployed; holistic consumer centred focus; collaboration of services

PowerPoint presentation

https://www.conftool.net/integratedcare2014/index.php?page=downloadPaper&form_id=254
