

Vulnerable Families Care Coordinator

Strategic Direction 3:
Strengthen primary health and continuing care
in the community.

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Background

- An initiative of the Families NSW Strategy and demonstrates a unique partnership between Nepean Women and Children's Health (W&CH), Community, Child and Family Health (CC&FH) and Non-Government Organisations (NGO's).
- It's principles are based on early intervention: to achieve change we need to act as soon as possible.
- In the current climate of high need, soaring mental health issues and increasing parental problems, this position is Innovative, unique and vital.

Aim

- Develop a model of care that provides appropriate services and support for pregnant women following identification of psychosocial risk factors during pregnancy.
- A model that is both **collaborative** and **integrated**.

Strategic importance

- Three strategic directions are supported by the vulnerable families care coordinator's position:
 - 1. NSW State Plan - The New Direction for NSW Fairness and Opportunity - Priority 6:
 - 2. NSW State Health Plan Strategic Direction 3: Strengthen primary health and continuing care in the community. This is based on early intervention, and integration of service provision.
 - 3. NSW Health Safe Start program

Nature and Extent of the Problem

- Introduction of psychosocial assessment
- Gaps in service provision became apparent:
- No perinatal mental health service,
- Poor collaboration with Department of Community Services (DOCS).
- No service plan for women **not** attending for routine antenatal care.

Extent of the Problem

- 300 pregnant women book for antenatal care each month at Nepean Hospital.
- 50 of these 300 are identified with with a range of significant psychosocial risk factors such as drug and alcohol use, child at risk issues, anxiety or depression, grief and loss, aboriginality and adolescents.
- The main pathway for these families was thru social work.

Planning & Implementing solutions

- Review of current service provision/ Identification of service gaps. What did we find??
- Consultation with key stakeholders led to:
- Development of new, appropriate and sustainable pathways for pregnant women in need of extra support, through engagement with service providers
- Development of the Pink Link program
- Caseload development

Planning & Implementing solutions

- Education and Clinical supervision
- Justice Health Meetings
- Review of the Paediatric discharge tool

Outcomes & Evaluation

- The development of collaborative partnerships with key services
- 215 families have now been referred for case management
- Highly vulnerable families, who have in the past not accessed care, are now being offered a successful alternative, engaging them with health services increasing the potential to build stronger families.
- The establishment of fortnightly multi-disciplinary vulnerable family meetings have assisted social work and the vulnerable families coordinator to prioritise referrals and work collaboratively.

Outcomes & Evaluation

- Quarterly meetings with Justice Health and the Department of Corrective Services have resulted in improved service coordination for women in custody who give birth at Nepean.
- "A great deal of extra education, communication and support has been provided for the midwives", "The position affords a valuable link between DoCS and Health and will play a key role in identifying and assessing vulnerable families for referral to the DoCS Early Intervention Program."

Outcomes & Evaluation

- Provided good supportive mechanisms have been put into place, there will be:
 - Increased birth weight
 - Improved birth outcomes
 - Women who feel connected and supported by their family and community are more resilient
 - Improved self esteem which leads to more confident mothering
 - Improved behavioural & emotional wellbeing for children at age 4

Sustaining Change

- How do we sustain this model?
- Always a difficult question
- Permanent funding of the position
- Management support
- Established community partners

Lessons Learned

- Small steps can lead to big journeys.
- Collaboration is the key to success
- Management support is vital
- Families teach us too

Future Scope

- Families NSW is the NSW government's prevention and early intervention strategy to help parents give their children a good start in life and requires all women and children's health facilities to conduct psychosocial assessment for pregnant women.
- The experience that Nepean Hospital, as part of SWAHS, has gained as a consequence of the assessment process and the ensuing development of a unique program that coordinates services to assist vulnerable families is transferable to the majority of maternity units across NSW.

Future Scope

- Longer term effects of supporting families early include:
- Reduced incidence of PND.
- Improved mother/baby attachment
- Reduced crime
- Longer time spent at school.
- Longitudinal studies needed.