

Family Mental Health Support Service

Types of support provided to Indigenous carers

CentaCare's Family Mental Health Support Service provides support to Indigenous carers in the Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar, Forbes, Parkes, Broken Hill, Menindee, Lake Cargelligo, Condobolin, Canowindra, Peak Hill and Wilcannia regions.

Types of support include:

- Holistic case management support (to obtain housing, to access support for mental health, financial advice, medical assistance, access to child relate services, etc.)
- Group respite support – art, craft activities, morning teas and luncheons
- Educational workshops – stress management, grief and loss, anti-anxiety, anger management, cultural awareness activities, parenting courses, anger management, anti-bullying.
- Wellbeing days – relaxation, pampering activities
- Advocacy and referrals
- Emotional support
- Access to resources through a comprehensive resource library (which includes indigenous resources)
- Young carer after school groups and school holiday activities
- In school support and education for young carers

How are Indigenous carers identified?

- Indigenous carers are mainly identified through word of mouth and family referrals.
- Strong connections with community Elders and leaders assists with this process and assures the carer of the trust that their Elder / Leader has in the service. This greatly assists in alleviating any concerns the carer may have.
- Through media advertising of activities and events many Indigenous carers have self referred.
- Referrals from key partner agencies, especially schools.
- Community events are a fantastic method of reaching “hidden” carers, particularly those that highlight the role of a carer and the support available.
- Community notice board advertising

How they engage indigenous carers in accessing services

- Indigenous carers are engaged initially through invitation to group activities which provide a non threatening environment conducive to alleviating any fears or concerns. This provides a platform for building trust with the FMHSS worker and an awareness of other types of support available through FMHSS.
- On initial assessment carers are informed of services available and assured of confidentiality.

- Strong working relationships with Indigenous focused community agencies also assists in breaking down barriers to accessing services.
- Support is offered to transport and accompany carers to referral appointments to assist in the transition to new services and programs.
- Community events allow the wider community and newly referred clients to meet staff and sample other services, hence reducing fears of accessing a service where staff are not well known to them. Opportunities are given to obtain information and access services through face to face referral.

How services are provided

- Case management support is provided in a non confrontational manner, either in the office or through home visits, whichever the client feels more comfortable with.
- On registering with the program, clients are given information packs which include resources relevant to carers including emergency contact information for their community. This includes information around Mental Health, Self Care and Wellbeing information with particular attention to education around reducing stress , tips for carers, emergency contact numbers (Statewide and Local agencies), Beyond Blue Mental Health Resources and the Mental Health Helpline pamphlet. Care is taken to provide these resources in a culturally appropriate format, if available.
- Group services are provided in small groups in culturally appropriate places.
- Consultation with carers allows for continuous improvement and carers ideas and feedback to be used for future planning.
- Excursions to culturally relevant sites are important and regularly incorporated into activities.
- Culturally relevant craft activities are included in craft sessions. When facilitating young carer activities, Indigenous art resources are used e.g. for dot painting kits, mask making using Indigenous templates and hand art.
- Grief and loss support is offered continually in groups or one a one to one basis as required and is sensitively delivered.
- Transport is offered to assist clients to attend workshops and group activities, which alleviates barriers to attendance, especially in times of extreme heat.
- Employment of Indigenous staff assists with reducing barriers to help seeking.
- Employees are encouraged to complete the Indigenous Mental Health First Aid course to enable them to better support Aboriginal people with mental illnesses or in a mental health crisis situation.
- Use of technology (photography, ipads, ipods) to assist in engagement using the latest relevant tools for mental health support.
- Consultation with Elders and Community Leaders to ensure services are tailored to meet current community needs.
- Opportunities are given for Indigenous clients to tell their stories in a safe environment through “Yarning sessions”.
- Indigenous programs and activities are utilized at every opportunities including the Resourceful Adolescent program –Indigenous Version.
- Use of resources that are culturally appropriate in a range of formats, pamphlets, DVDs, CDs, books and fliers. Resource library is continually added to and revised, available for loan by all clients. Whenever possible, Indigenous resources are sought and offered to clients. Legal resources are also available.

Examples of Indigenous specific resources include, but or not limited to:

- 1) Mental Health First Aid Indigenous guidelines

- 2) Depression Yarns (Beyond Blue DVD)
- 3) Skills & Strengths of Indigenous Dads, Uncles, Pops, Brothers DVDs
- 4) Talking up our Strengths Flashcards
- 5) Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid manuals
- 6) Black Dog Institute resources (e.g. Living with a Black Dog)
- 7) CentaCare's own Self Care Flashcards
- 8) CentaCare's own Carers stories publication ("Journeys of Hope")
- 9) "Talk Good To Yaself!", "Blak n' blues" Beyond Blue publications
- 10) Yarning up on Trauma