



Children grow from good beginnings

Funded by The R.E. Ross Trust



CENTRE FOR
Community
Child Health

NEWSLETTER

What is this project about?

The Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH), in partnership with "Good Beginnings" Australia, has been funded by The R.E. Ross Trust to develop and implement a methodology for local communities to:

- refocus existing family and children's services in the local area to ensure they provide an emphasis on prevention, early detection and early intervention.
- establish processes and structures at a local community level so that family and children's services collaborate to provide an integrated network of family centred services.

The rationale for this project is based on the research and practice evidence that suggests the lack of coordination of relevant services at a local level make it difficult for families. To provide optimal, safe and nurturing environments that young children need to establish a favourable developmental trajectory that leads to good outcomes, families require integrated support.

The aim of the project is to empower local communities and equip them with the necessary expertise so that they can effectively refocus existing services.

What are we doing?

Phase One

This phase began in 2002 and included widespread community consultation to establish what communities and professionals know about the early years and the implications of new research evidence for their professional practice. The types of support and resources professionals and service providers required to refocus their services in order to provide a greater emphasis on prevention, early detection and early intervention were identified. Strategies to improve coordination and integration at the local level were also determined. A comprehensive literature review on the evidence about community-based service redevelopment and community engagement was also undertaken. Working with three local government areas – urban (Port Phillip), outer metropolitan (Knox) and regional (Wodonga) – the feasibility of the project and needs and priorities of practitioners in the community were established.

Phase Two

Phase two comprises three tasks. The first component of Phase Two included the dissemination of findings from Phase One, provision of workshops for the Best Start Partnerships, four seminars for professionals, support for the Strategic Alliance with the Municipal Association of Victoria and exploration of stronger linkages and involvement of primary schools in the project. Further information and the literature review can be downloaded from the www.econnections.com.au website.

The second component of Phase Two involves a community facilitator working closely with local government councillors and managers, agency managers, professional groups, and parents in the City of Port Phillip and City of Knox. To date, the facilitators have conducted widespread community consultation; audited the services and activities of relevant professional groups; and are continuing to work closely with local media, local community agencies, and others to promote the project. A framework and plan has been developed to refocus activities in these communities. The plan includes strategies to address identified needs such as improved service coordination and the use of training and resources for professionals.

The third component of Phase Two involves the development of a comprehensive range of training materials that will be implemented and evaluated. The content of these materials is currently being designed to provide communities with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to refocus existing services in their local area to emphasise prevention, early detection and early intervention. The materials will also provide guidance and support to communities on establishing the local processes and structures to facilitate closer coordination and integration of children's and families' services.

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The content of these training materials will include areas such as:

- Service coordination between different professional groups
- Methods of early detection of problems and risk factors in young children and families
- Engagement with parents and facilitating their involvement in service planning
- Working in partnerships with families
- Community consultation strategies
- Mapping of existing resources and supports available in the community
- Designing data collection tools such as community needs surveys and evaluation processes for different target audiences

Additional funding has generously been provided by the R.E. Ross Trust to enable the participation of schools in the project. Further details will be provided in the next edition.

Where are we up to?

Seminars.

With funding from The R.E. Ross Trust, CCCH ran four half-day seminars in 2003 for professionals involved with young children and their families. These were well-attended and well-received, and a further four are scheduled for 2004. The first of these has just been held, and focussed on the general topic of *Children in a Changing World: Helping Children Thrive in the 21st Century*. The seminar featured three impressive speakers: Don Edgar (former director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies), Gillian Calvert (NSW Commissioner for Children and Young People) and Robin Sullivan (Queensland Commissioner for Children and Young People). This was a particularly stimulating and challenging session, and an excellent start to the 2004 series. Further seminars are scheduled for May, August and October. Each of these will involve the launch of two of the CD ROM training modules (see below).

Training modules.

Work has commenced on the development of six CD ROM-based training modules. These are intended for use in training professionals or service providers who work with young children and their families. Each of the modules will contain all the information, activities and resources needed to run a 3-hour interactive workshop for 15-25 participants. There are two modules currently in production.

- The first focuses on the core knowledge about child development and family functioning needed by all who work with young children and their families.

- The second will provide an introduction to family partnerships. These are due to be launched at the second of the CCCH / Ross Trust seminars in May 2004.

Community Development

As part of the R.E. Ross Trust "The Early Years Project", Good Beginnings has focused on implementing a community centred approach which aims to assist people to be better informed about what services are available to support them, assists agency staff to identify creative local ways to respond to people's needs and promotes community connectedness - building capacity at both family level and across the many dimensions of community.

The areas that are being focused on include South Melbourne and St. Kilda Road within the City of Port Phillip and the community of Rowville within the City of Knox.

The City of Port Phillip project commenced in March 2003 followed in June by the City of Knox project. Both projects have assumed their own personalities, focusing on a variety of issues from enhancing community social connections, supporting and resourcing playgroups, infant nutrition, focus on fathering. Each will enhance service connections and information exchange, and assist each community and its local government authority to best utilise resources in the creation of an early years family resource centre.

NEXT SEMINAR

Working with young children and their families: what we need to know

Launch of training modules:

- Core module: Understanding the underlying factors influencing child health and development and family functioning
- 1A: Family centred practice

Friday 21st of May, 2004

Glen Ira Centre
Corner Glen Eira and Hawthorn Roads, Caulfield

Cost: \$66 incl GST

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