



Australian Government

Australian Institute of Family Studies

Embedding research in practice: Research within Family Relationship Centres in Australia

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In this presentation

- Background to project
- The role of research and evaluation in FRCs
- Methodology and results
- Themes arising from analysis
- Discussion



Australian Family Relationship Clearinghouse

- Website - www.aifs.gov.au/afrc
- Publications
 - ◆ Family Relationships Quarterly
 - ◆ AFRC Briefing
 - ◆ AFRC Issues
 - ◆ AFRC Resource Sheets
- *AFRC-alert* - electronic newsletter and alert



Research and Evaluation

- Topic for AFRC Briefing Paper No. 14 - action research projects in FRCs (Round 1 & 2 of funding)
- Written by Catherine Caruana and Robyn Parker
- Aim - to provide insight into issues facing centres in first two years of operation and ways in which issues have been examined through research projects.



Methodology

- Invitations to participate in survey sent to CEOs of host organisations
- If agreement, talked to FRC managers and/or sent proformas
- Analysis of data



Results

- Response from 21 of 40 centres
- 58 projects
- Four main themes emerged:
 - ◆ Internal processes
 - ◆ Child focused and child inclusive practice
 - ◆ Target groups
 - ◆ Evaluation of FRCs generally



Theme 1: Internal FRC procedures

- 25 projects across 10 FRCs
 - Day-to-day centre management, e.g. meeting
 - Issues related to clients
 - Issues related to staff
- Case study: Joondalup and Mandurah FRCs
 - What would it take to develop effective practices to ensure clients understand the concept of 'genuine effort' in dispute resolution?



Theme 2: Child Focus

- Evaluating child-inclusive practice and the child focus of FRCs
 - ◆ Feedback forms, entry and exit surveys, interviews and focus groups
 - ◆ Newcastle and Sutherland FRCs - effectiveness of FRCs in engendering greater child focus in fathers
- Insights from practitioners
 - ◆ Hobart FRC 2-day practitioner forum
 - ◆ Gold Coast FRC data collection and analysis tool



Theme 2: Child Focus

- The voices of children
 - ◆ Capturing views of children
 - ◆ Children's involvement in parental decision making
- Investigating child-inclusive practice and child focus through action research
 - ◆ Developing or fine tuning seminar programs
- Case study
 - ◆ Frankston FRC
 - ◆ Was the FDR model adopted effective in the locality? Was there any sign of a culture change in parents' thinking?



Theme 3: Target groups

- CALD and Indigenous clients
 - ◆ How to better access and service target groups
 - ◆ Number of methods used
 - ◆ Darwin FRC
- Including fathers
 - ◆ Tracking fathers through FDR process
 - ◆ How to actively engage fathers
- Other groups
 - ◆ Grandparents
 - ◆ Non-instigating parties



Evaluation of FRCs generally

- Client engagement with FRCs more broadly
 - ◆ Client preparation for and experiences of FDR (e.g. Nowra, Gold Coast)
 - ◆ Service model effectiveness in locality (e.g. Frankston)
 - ◆ Family relationship services awareness (Rockhampton)
 - ◆ Community education workshop topics - preference of clients (Upper Mt Gravatt)
- Case study
 - ◆ Upper Mt Gravatt FRC
 - ◆ What would it take to ensure that our community education workshops meet the needs of our clients?



Discussion

- Snapshot of projects - hope to repeat regularly
- Range of reasons for non-response
- Key messages
 - ◆ Factors driving and shaping FRC research models
 - ◆ Research topics
 - ◆ Choice of methodology
 - ◆ Research partners



Use of research partners

- Factors identified as important
 - ◆ A manager and parent body who understand and value research
 - ◆ Researcher with good knowledge/passion for the sector
 - ◆ Willingness for researcher to work collaboratively with staff
 - ◆ Good communication - keeping FRC staff informed as to progress of research
 - ◆ Research topic of relevance and interest to staff
 - ◆ Clear understanding of financial arrangements relating to partnership



Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse

- AFRC Briefing No. 14
 - ◆ <http://www.aifs.gov.au/afrc/pubs/briefing/briefing14.html>
- FRC research profiles
 - ◆ <http://www.aifs.gov.au/afrc/frc/index.html>
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