Feeling Deadly, *Working Deadly*

NCETA
Australia's National Research Centre on AOD Workforce Development

S4. SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG WORKERS (INCLUDING MENTORING)

Theory Into Practice (TIP) sheet for managers/supervisors

This TIP sheet is intended for supervisors and managers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander[1] alcohol and other drug (AOD) workers. It is part of a suite of resources that has been produced by the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA) at Flinders University to enhance Indigenous worker wellbeing and reduce work-related stress.

The resources were developed following a review of relevant literature; and an extensive consultation process involving public submissions, a national on-line survey, interviews and focus groups. Quotations from the consultations appear in italics in the TIP sheets.

Introduction

Indigenous AOD workers may face many unique stressors. These include:

- Heavy work demands resulting from working with clients who have complex health and social problems
- Difficulties in defining roles and boundaries with their clients
- Stigmatisation of their roles stemming from negative attitudes towards AOD work and from racism towards them and their client group
- Difficulties in translating mainstream work practices to meet the specific needs of Indigenous clients
- A lack of cultural understanding and support from non-Indigenous health workers
- Challenges of isolation when working in remote areas.

It's important to have a range of measures in place, such as mentoring programs, to support workers and the important work they do and to prevent stress and burnout.

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1 The terms Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous are used interchangeably throughout this document. We understand that some people have a preference for using one term over the other and we have used the terms interchangeably to be sensitive to these differing perspectives.

Outlined below are some basic steps that may help to make sure that your workplace offers sound workplace support (including mentoring) for Indigenous AOD workers.

What are Some Effective Ways of Supporting Indigenous AOD Workers?

- Ensure that new workers receive a comprehensive orientation to their workplace and roles
- 'Buddying' new workers during their orientation period to help them adjust to the work environment
- Be conscious of employees' cultural experiences and values and be willing to learn and adopt alternative ways of working.

Types of Workplace Support

1. Social/emotional support is focused on meeting workers' needs to feel valued, cared for, respected and liked.
2. Instrumental support is focussed on providing workers with practical assistance with their roles, responsibilities and tasks.

There is no set way for working out the best combination of social/instrumental support from the organisation, supervisors and co-workers. The best strategy is to find out from workers themselves the kinds of support they need.

	Social/emotional support	Instrumental support
Organisation	• Ensuring fair treatment • Providing valued rewards • Ensuring supportive supervision	• Ensuring good job conditions (physical safety, job security, promotion paths, job freedom) • Dealing with work overload • Access to high quality resources and equipment
Managers/Supervisors	• Making sure that organisational support reaches workers • Providing praise encouragement, caring, respect • Recognising and rewarding good work • Involving workers in decision making	
Co-workers	• Providing praise encouragement, caring, respect	• Providing help and advice • Filling in when others are away • Helping with heavy workloads • Giving helpful feedback • Giving appreciation and recognition • Sharing duties and responsibilities

Management and Organisational Support

The following are examples of Management and Organisational Support that managers/supervisors may use to support their workers.

Management Support	Organisational Support

- Include in job descriptions the requirement for workers to provide a range of different forms of support to colleagues such as buddying, mentoring and debriefing

- Ensure each worker's job description is accurate, specific and up-to-date

- Identify professional development activities opportunities and support workers' attendance at relevant training and activities

- Ensure that regular performance reviews are undertaken.

- Ensure orientation manuals reflect organisational commitment to creating a culturally safe working environment for indigenous staff in mainstream organisations

- Offer networking opportunities for staff to meet other Indigenous workers from the organisation or from organisations that provide similar or complementary services

- Provide time and resources for formal support and debriefing sessions between co-workers, mentors, supervisors and/or managers

- Provide opportunities for community members and clients to learn about the role of workers and what the organisation/worker can or can't do for clients

- Seek input from workers on internal policies and procedures and organisational goal setting.

Mentoring

What is Mentoring?

- Mentoring is an informal and flexible approach to leadership, supervision and professional development

- Mentoring is a supportive partnership relationship between a more experienced worker (the mentor) and a less experienced worker (the protégé)

- It can provide a safe and supportive place in which the protégé can learn to manage stressful and difficult situations and develop problem solving skills to address issues and challenges related to working in the AOD field

- Mentoring relationships can occur between a mentor and a protégé (or a small group of protégés) or it may involve peers who act as mentors for each other

- Mentoring can help create a sustainable workforce by building on the skills and knowledge base of the current workforce.

What Mentoring is Not

Mentoring is *not* about providing counselling on personal issues. If personal counselling is required, this should be provided by a qualified counselling service such as an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). It is important that EAPs providing services to Indigenous workers do so in a culturally appropriate manner.

Mentoring is also different to supervision and performance reviews. These are separate processes and should not be confused with mentoring.

Mentoring is also not just having a friendly chat from time to time. Mentoring involves setting goals and objectives and should be regarded as a developmental, rather than a social activity.

Why is Mentoring Important?

Mentoring can address a range of workforce development challenges by:

- Building on the skill base of both experienced and less experienced workers, as the mentors develop their own teaching and management skills, whilst the protégés develop organisational and clinical skills

- Providing worker support especially during periods of organisational change

- Helping retain experienced and valued workers, this can further develop their own professional skills and experiences

- Supporting worker wellbeing, by providing opportunities to discuss stressful work events, by developing helpful strategies and discussing and clarifying the worker's roles and responsibilities related to the job

- Facilitating work practice change.

What's Needed for a Successful Mentoring Relationship and Program?

A successful mentoring relationship requires mutual respect, trust and confidentiality between the mentor and protégé. This can be developed by each person making a commitment to:

- Being aware about their own personal strengths and weaknesses, and being willing to learn from the other person

- Listening to both positive and negative feedback, and welcoming ideas to improve work practice and learn from mistakes

- Setting and attending regular meetings, whilst trying to be flexible about meeting times

- Ensuring that discussions are kept confidential.

The organisation, or the work environment, also has an important role to play in the development of successful mentoring programs. The work environment should:

- Be prepared to make time for mentors and protégés to meet regularly

- Provide a culture of trust and fairness, commitment to staff development and learning, good communication processes and the sharing of problems and responsibilities.

Who Should Be Involved in Mentoring Programs?

Each new or junior Indigenous AOD worker should be offered the option of participating in a mentoring program but the protégé always has the final say in who they would like to accept as a mentor. In most instances, an Indigenous worker will best be mentored by a more experienced Indigenous colleague either from their own organisation or a similar one. The issue of the best gender match also needs to be considered carefully; often male:male and female:female matches are preferable.

Participation in mentoring programs should not be limited to new and junior employees. Most employees, including managers, can benefit from involvement in a mentoring program.

How to set goals and objectives in mentoring

To get the maximum benefit from a mentoring relationship, it is helpful for the person being mentored to identify what they would like to get from the relationship and the investment.

To achieve this, it is useful to specify specific goals and objectives to be worked towards.

- Goals are the long term outcomes that the person being mentored is aiming to achieve or change.
- Objectives are the more specific shorter term actions, behaviours and work practices that will be needed to reach the goal.

Practical Tip:

Use a mentoring meeting form divided into the following columns to identify goals and to track steps being taken to achieve the final goal(s).

Goal	Objective	Task	Review Date	Comments	Progress
Goal #1					(e.g. None, some, a lot, complete)
Goal #2					
Goal #3					

Where to get more information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce support

To find out more information about what is available to you locally, we recommend that you contact your relevant state or territory's peak community controlled health organisation. Most of these organisations offer a wide variety of workforce support options, including workforce development units, health worker networks, accredited training courses and newsletters and magazines. In most instances they should be able to refer you to an appropriate organisation in your region. Contact details are provided below.

ACT: Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Services
Ph: 02 6284 6222

NSW: Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of New South Wales (AH&MRC)
Ph: 02 9212 4777

NT: Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT)
Ph: 08 8944 6666

QLD: Queensland Aboriginal & Islander Health Council (QAIHC)
Ph: 07 3328 8500

SA: Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia (AHCSA)
Ph: 08 8273 7200

TAS: Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre
Ph: 03 6234 0700

VIC: Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)
Ph: 03 9411 9411

WA: Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA)
Ph: 08 9227 1631

NCETA resources on how to set up a mentoring program

McDonald, J. (2002). Mentoring: An age old strategy for a rapidly expanding field. In A.M. Roche & J. McDonald (Eds.), *Catching Clouds: Exploring Diversity in Workforce Development for the Alcohol and Other Drug Field* (pp. 105-114). National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA), Flinders University: Adelaide.

National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA) (2005). *A Mentoring Resource Kit for the Alcohol and other Drugs Field*. National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA), Flinders University: Adelaide.

Roche, A.M., Todd, C., & O'Connor, J. (2007). *Clinical supervision in the alcohol and other drugs field: An imperative or an option? Drug and Alcohol Review, 26*(3), 241.

Todd, C. (2005). Mentoring. In N. Skinner, A.M. Roche, J. O'Connor, Y. Pollard & C. Todd (Eds.), *Workforce Development TIPS (Theory Into Practice Strategies): A resource kit for the alcohol and other drugs field*. National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA), Flinders University: Adelaide.

Other useful sources include:

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) Aboriginal health workforce: http://www.naccho.org.au/activities/workforce.html

Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet web pages on substance misuse and health workers:
http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/health-risks/substance-misuse
http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/health-systems/health-workers

National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee (NIDAC): http://www.nidac.org.au/

National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA): http://www.nceta.flinders.edu.au

Bush Support Services (formerly known as the Bush Crisis Line): http://bss.crana.org.au/
Bush Support Line: Telephone 1800 805 391

Making two worlds work: resource kit: http://www.whealth.com.au/ourwork/making_two_worlds_work.html

Koori practice checklist: A cultural audit tool for the alcohol and other drugs services sector: http://www.ngwala.org/

AMSANT administration manual for Aboriginal primary health care services in the Northern Territory: http://www.amsantmanual.com/