Feeling Deadly, *Working Deadly*

S7. DEVELOPING DEADLY TEAMS

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

Teams can be a great source of support and can lead to effective working environments. But working well in teams doesn't always occur easily or naturally. Making sure that teams work well is very important to Indigenous AOD workers. It is important for both client care and worker wellbeing.

A team is two or more people who:

- See themselves, and are seen by others in the organisation, as a team
- Work towards common goals or purposes and work together to achieve these goals
- Perform work as a group for which team members are all responsible.

Teams can also be:

- Ongoing (work together over long periods of time, have specific roles, meet frequently) or
- Temporary task-specific teams (having defined or flexible roles meeting occasionally and disbanding after achieving their goals).

There are no hard and fast rules about which team structures, processes or membership work best. How well a team works depends on a range of factors, including the tasks to be performed and the kind of organisation involved.

"Workers get strength from their shared experience, having support groups, getting involved with community, families, friends, colleagues." (Indigenous worker)

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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.

What Needs to Happen to Build and Support Effective Teams?

Step 1: Work out the team's goals and objectives

Good teams have a "shared mission" identified by clear goals and objectives. Goals are the overall long-term outcomes that the team is aiming to achieve. Objectives are more specific shorter-term actions, behaviours and work practices that are needed in order to reach the goal.

Setting team goals and objectives can:

- Increase motivation and effort
- Encourage team members to cooperate, communicate, coordinate and plan better
- Develop a sense of shared purpose and mutual gain.

Team members' commitment to their goals and objectives is likely to be stronger if goal setting is conducted together and all team members participate in discussions.

Step 2: Set up the team structure and processes

Careful thought and planning is needed to make sure that team membership achieves a balance between maintaining a manageable size, and including a mix of skills, knowledge and experience. There are four aspects to this:

1. *Getting the team size right*
   There are no set rules regarding the team size that is likely to produce the best teams. Group size also depends on a group's task. In general, teams of 4-7 members are likely to be most effective. Groups of this size avoid difficulties with coordination, communication and decision-making that may occur in larger groups.

2. *Having diverse teams and managing this*
   Diverse teams can be helpful for problem-solving, creative work and comprehensive clinical care because these teams can draw on their collective knowledge and experience. To make sure these teams run smoothly it is important to:

   » Include a range of expertise
   » Rotate the team leader role
   » Make sure that the team leader shows the other team members how to best work in diverse teams.

3. *Give the teams enough freedom to do their jobs to a high standard in the best way they can.* This:

   » Improves motivation, job satisfaction, commitment and confidence
   » Provides opportunities to use current skills and learn new skills.

4. *Clarifying roles and responsibilities*
   It is important that all team members are clear about each other's roles and responsibilities, otherwise there can be problems with team effectiveness and job commitment.

Step 3: Establish workplace supports

It is important to:

- Provide performance feedback to individual team members as well as to the group as a whole.
- Provide rewards linked to performance outcomes. Rewards do not have to be financial. Effective non-financial rewards include:

  » Public recognition and praise
  » Team celebrations
  » Preferred work assignments, roles or responsibilities
  » Opportunities to act in higher duties
  » Attendance at workshops/conferences.
- Provide managerial/supervisory support including the necessary resources (e.g., backfilling, rostering, time in lieu) to enable regular team meetings.