

HELPING OUR FAMILIES TO GROW

A GROUP PROGRAM FOR FAMILIES WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE ISSUES

Presenters

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Hope Tree with participants
goals

Substance Use in Pregnancy and Parenting Service (SUPPS) Partnership between



BARNARDOS

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MATERNAL & PAEDIATRICS SERVICES, WOLLONGONG HOSPITAL

COMMUNITY SERVICES

WHAT IS SUPPS?

- ◎ **Collaborative team** of midwives, neonatal staff, drug and alcohol nurses, mental health staff, Community Services and Non Government Family Support staff providing intensive ante natal care, drug and alcohol treatment and family work for pregnant women with substance abuse issues and their families.
- ◎ Family Support work continues with a post natal service up to the point where the child is 3 years old.

IDENTIFYING THE NEED

- ⦿ That many of the current groups require literacy and ability to concentrate which is difficult for this cohort.
- ⦿ That no groups specifically addressed impact of D&A use on children and parenting capacity.
- ⦿ Importance of peer influence and support to make changes.
- ⦿ Therefore the team decided to develop a group to meet the needs of our clients.
- ⦿ Identified that there are no groups for parents who have children removed in local area.

PARTNERSHIP

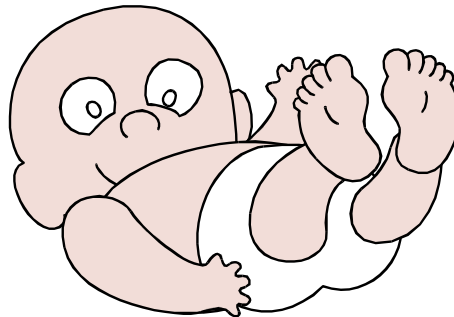
- ◎ The Development and facilitation of the Group program is a partnership between Barnardos and Drug and Alcohol Services.
- ◎ The development, planning and implementation required a team approach.

GROUP DEVELOPMENT

- The team met for several sessions.
- Brainstormed components which we thought were necessary.
- Searched for appropriate groups and research.
- Agreed on American program 'Nurturing Program For Families in Substance Abuse Treatment and Recovery'.
- Made changes to the American Program in relation to culture, harm minimisation approach and setting.
- Agreed on Pre and Post measure for the parents.

CRITICAL ASPECTS

- Respect and Hope
- Transport Provided and Childcare
- Nutritious Food Provided
- Resources to support topics
- Assessments prior to admission
- Understanding of Impact of parents trauma in childhood.
- Competency
- Safety



THE PARENTING PROGRAM

12 parents commenced and ten completed the program (attendance six sessions)

- **Week 1: Families and Substance Abuse**

In this session discussion centred on at what makes up a family, how families work, how substance abuse affects families and how recovery affects families.

- **Week 2: Feelings/Self Esteem**

This session focused on identifying feelings and learning nurturing ways of responding to feelings, for ourselves and for children and to identify concrete actions individuals and families can take to increase positive self esteem.

- **Week 3: Managing Stress/ What Babies Teach Us**

This session focused on understanding the factors which affect our ability to manage the daily requirements of our lives and our children's lives and increase parents' ability to set clear and nurturing limits for themselves and their children. The session also addressed ways to enhance participant's skills in self calming and calming their children.

- **Week 4: Boundaries/Communication**

This session was developed to increase parent's ability to set clear and nurturing limits for themselves and their children. The session also addressed the need for parents to increase their ability to develop and use nurturing routines for themselves and their children and increase their understanding of clear, effective communication.

THE PARENTING PROGRAM CONT...

- **Week 5: Confrontation and Problem Solving**

This session was developed to help parents to differentiate between criticism and confrontation and to increase their confidence in using confrontation. The session aimed to increase participant's ability to identify strategies to change unproductive communication and to practice communication and problem solving skills.

- **Week 6: Safety & Protecting Children + Schedules & Routines**

This session was designed to assist parents to establish a safe physical environment for parents and their children. It also focused on the importance of schedules and routines for children and households including how they assist in brain development, creating safety, managing behaviour and managing stress.

- **Week 7: Recovery: Love and Loss**

This session focuses on some of the most painful areas for parents in recovery: the losses they and their children have experienced and the separations that may have occurred due to substance use. This session is designed to increase parents' understanding of the effects of substance abuse on themselves and their families, to increase parents' skill in promoting their families recovery.

- **Week 8: Having Fun**

This session was designed to assist parents to build an understanding of the importance of play in building positive relationships between themselves and their children. The session also focused on encouraging the participants to think about how they can have fun with their children and also have fun as adults without using drugs and alcohol.

MEASURES

- ◎ The AAPI-2 is an inventory designed to assess the parenting and child rearing attitudes of adolescents and adult parent and pre-parent populations. Based on the known parenting and child rearing behaviours of abusive parents, responses to the inventory provide an index of risk for practicing behaviours known to be attributable to child abuse and neglect. The AAPI-2 is the revised and re-normed version of the original AAPI first developed in 1979.

Sub-Scales

Responses to the AAPI-2 provide an index of risk in five specific parenting and child rearing behaviours:

Construct A - Expectations of Children

Understanding of a child's growth and development, understanding the importance of allowing children to exhibit normal developmental behaviours (i.e. temper tantrums) and the concept of themselves as a care giver.

Construct B - Parental Empathy towards Children's needs

Understanding of a child's needs and ability to recognise feelings of children and the understanding of the importance of encouraging a child's positive growth.

Construct C - Use of Corporal Punishment

Understanding of the alternatives to corporal punishment. The importance of including all of the family in establishing rules and routines and that rules are not just for the child and values mutual parent-child relationships.

Construct D - Parent-Child Family Roles

Understanding that a parents need to find comfort, support and companionship from their friends and not their children and the importance of being responsible for their own behaviour as a parent.

Construct E - Children's Power and Independence

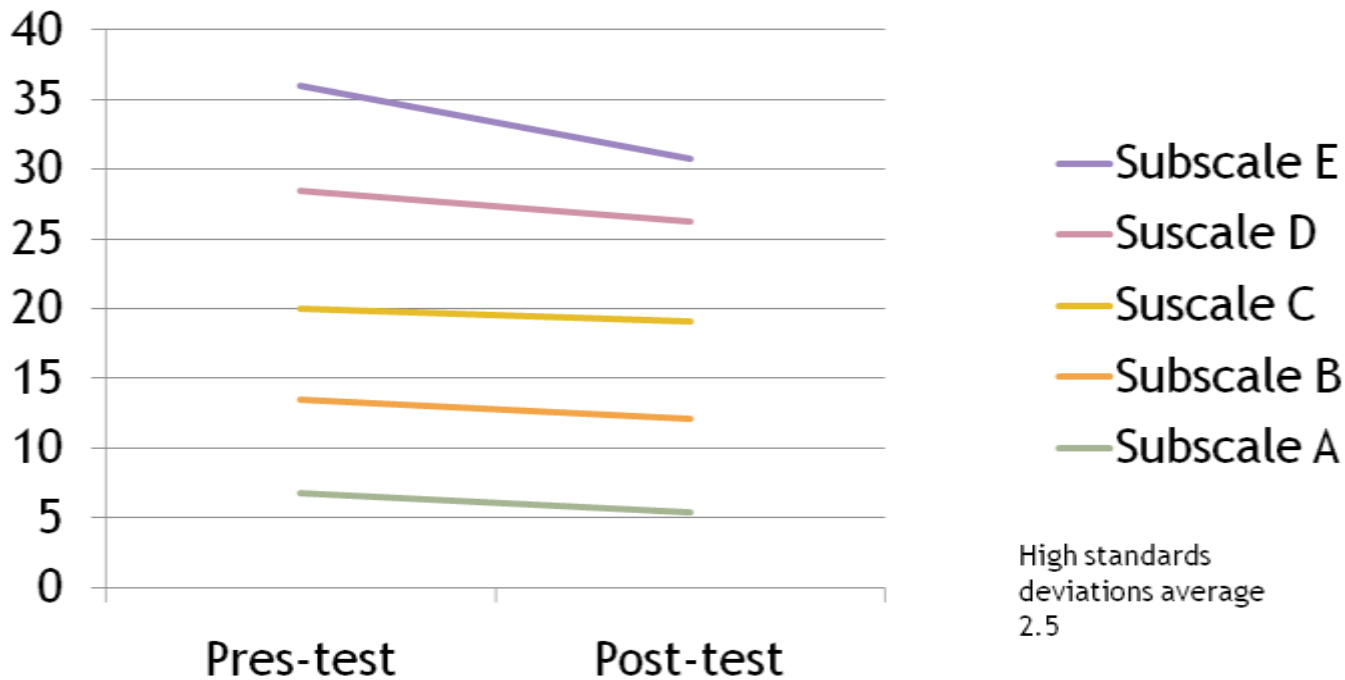
Understanding of the use of compromise with children. Understanding of the child's need to demonstrate age appropriate independence and personal power.

MEASURES CONT.

- ◎ The University of Rhode Island Change Assessment Scale URICA was used to assess the clinical process and motivational readiness for change as well as to measure process and outcome variables for a variety of health and addictive behaviours. Parents were asked to identify a problem and answers questions in relation to that.
- ◎ Client satisfaction survey

OUTCOMES

AAPI-2 Results on all the subscales indicated an increase in Risk for children at post-test



WHAT DO WE THINK HAPPENED

- The team believe that the increase in risks may be due to -
As engagement increased parents became more willing to provide honest answers to their own parenting attitudes.
- The Implication is that the assumption that knowledge about preferred (low risk) parenting attitudes is not sufficient for change.
- That is they knew what they were meant to be doing to reduce risk but found it difficult to put into practice.

OUTCOMES CONT.

- ◎ *Scores on the URICA indicated an average of a five point increase in motivation for change in the group.*
- ◎ *Feedback from the evaluations indicated that parents wanted more weeks in the group and longer sessions.*
- ◎ *Feedback also indicated that transport, food and childcare had been critical factors in ability to attend.*
- ◎ *All parents completed the two competencies (home safety and schedules)*

WHERE TO FROM HERE

- ⦿ At the next group we will test the theory about engagement and will administer the pre-test on week three when there has been more opportunity to develop engagement with the group.
- ⦿ More focus on developing skills and competencies rather than increasing knowledge only.
- ⦿ Link areas of need to individual case plans in Individual family Support work.
- ⦿ New Group has started with ten participants.
- ⦿ Will continue to run the group twice a year as a component of the overall SUPPS Program.

LEARNINGS IN A NUTSHELL



- All the parents had experienced trauma as children.
- This group had significant challenges to parenting due to that trauma even when in recovery from substance misuse.
- Treatment programs which address substance misuse only do not address the problems associated with the challenges to improving parenting capacity as a result of traumatic experiences as children.
- Complex families with a variety of issues (Housing, DV, Poverty etc) need case management and ongoing support from a variety of agencies to reduce the risk to children.
- Parenting Group programs alone are not sufficient to bring about sustained change for this cohort they require a variety services working together with a combination of approaches.

THANKYOU