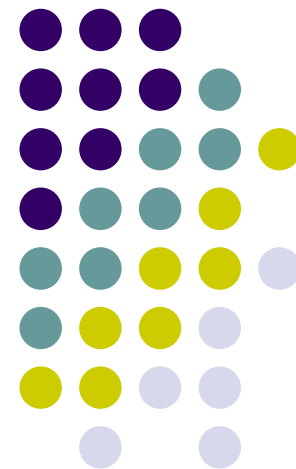


Providing Practical Support for Women on Non-Custodial Orders



Supporting Offenders and their Families

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VACRO



- VACRO is the Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
- We have a 134 year history, starting in 1872 as the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society
- We have a significant focus on families of offenders.
- We provide a range of programs and services for offenders and their families.
 - Community based
 - Prison based



CCaTS Background

- High rate of women's re-offending
- *Better Pathways* identified the need to provide practical support to women in order to reduce these rates
- VACRO is the community agency contracted to provide these services through the pilot and rollout stages



CCaTS Background

- Increased number of women in custody for breaching non-custodial orders
- Breaches related to non-compliance rather than re-offending
 - Breaches of non-custodial orders account for around one tenth of women in custody
- Access to transport and childcare identified as barriers to complying with conditions of an order



Supporting Offenders and their Families

CCaTS pilot



- Identified five CCS locations with a significant number of women clients who might use the scheme
 - 2 rural (Bendigo, Morwell)
 - 3 metropolitan (Frankston, Reservoir, Ringwood)
- Discussions with CCS case workers to identify:
 - Numbers of women with children on Corrections Orders
 - Existing transport & childcare services / service gaps
 - How to identify target group
 - Barriers to women accessing transport / childcare services
 - Support for the scheme



Developing the pilot

- A mapping exercise of each of the 5 locations was conducted to identify potential transport and child care providers and where service gaps existed
- From this we were able to identify some of the issues we needed to consider prior to implementing the pilot program
- The information collected as part of this process helped to develop the framework



Issues – child care

- Availability & cost of childcare places
- Gaps in service provision
- Target group tend to avoid using formal childcare services
- Anxiety that they may be identified as a person on an order and their children may be subject to discrimination
- Anxiety that they may be reported to child protection services
- Liability issues
- Women have limited skills to organise themselves
- Women bringing children to supervision



Solutions - childcare

- CCOs identify women and refer for service
- Requirement that women register with Centrelink
- Women select childcare and contact provider of:
 - ❖ Registered Childcare
 - ❖ All day / Occasional Childcare
 - ❖ Before/ After School Care
- Women drop off and collect children, making links in local community
- VACRO provides 'gap' payment for childcare



Issues - transport

- Availability & cost of transport
- Gaps in service provision
 - Limited or no public transport to some areas
 - Unreliable schedules
- Some women experience anxiety with using public transport
- Issues of transporting babies and children on public transport

Solutions -transport



- Subsidised travel and, where necessary client's accompanying children, to attend appointments and activities in order to meet the conditions of Community Order.
- Subsidised travel to and from childcare facilities, as required.
 - Metcards (purchased by VACRO & distributed to relevant CCS locations)
 - Taxi (accounts set up with local company)
 - Bus
 - Petrol Cards



Issues - attitudes

- Potential to ‘abuse / misuse system’
- Belief that children/transport difficulties are used as an ‘excuse’ to avoid Corrections obligations
- Perception that scheme ‘rewards’ women who are not complying
- ‘What about the blokes’?



Solutions - attitudes

- Increase awareness of the need to work with women 'differently'
- Need to challenge personal belief systems
- Increase awareness about the specific issues facing women as primary carers
- High level leadership within CV and DoJ
- Recognition of 'workload' issues and streamlining of process to simplify referral, paperwork and reporting

CCaTS rollout



- Information resources circulated to new CCaTS CCS locations
- Referral procedures and documentation developed
- Information for women and for Caseworkers
- VACRO procedures (admin & data) refined
- Accounts established with transport providers (taxi companies, V-Line) for direct billing
- Metcards purchased and distributed to relevant CCS locations



Figures

From 1 July 2007 – 3 December 2007

- 52 women used CCaTS
- 10 women used childcare
- 86 sessions of childcare
- 43 women used travel
- 353 journeys
- **Total subsidies provided: 439**



Eligibility & Referral

- Women on Community Correctional Order who require practical assistance to access childcare and/or transport in order to meet the conditions of their Order
- Referrals come through CCS but may be initiated from other sources



Emerging challenges

- Consider contributing factors other than financial:
 - Women's reluctance / refusal to use formal childcare services
 - Limited skills in problem solving, time management, organisation
- Consideration of culturally appropriate responses for CALD or Indigenous women

Chris' Story



“It was a real dilemma for me – I couldn’t pay the fines in the first place, which is why I was doing the community work. And I had lost my license, so I couldn’t drive. It was really hard to get around. I didn’t know how I was going to meet the costs of actually doing the reporting and the community work, because it meant getting around and getting Lina looked after so that I could get into Frankston and then go on and do the work.

I thought about trying to walk to the childcare with the pusher but it’s just too far. There was a lot of stress for me in thinking about the costs of getting around, when the whole thing is because of the fines that I couldn’t pay - and the lost license in the first place!

This is a great service.”