West Kimberley

Using Signs of Safety in a multi agency response to child sexual abuse in a remote Aboriginal Community

Presenters:
Kristen Orazi
Renae Smith
Rebekah Adcock
Cultural Acknowledgment

We would like to acknowledge the traditional owners past and present.

We pay special tribute to the Aboriginal peoples in the West Kimberley region.

Specifically we acknowledge the Aboriginal people of the communities in which the work that is the subject of this presentation was done.

We would like to pay special tribute to all of the brave children who have spoken up about sexual abuse, and the families who are supporting them to be strong in their Liyarn.
• Introduction to the West Kimberley

• The Signs of Safety Child Protection Framework

• Case Example – The Context

• The Community Response – The Safer Communities Model

• Using Words and Pictures to build safety for the children
West Kimberley District
Size: 192,000 sq. km.
Population: 27,000.
Staff: 91.7 FTE. (32% Aboriginal staff).
Children in care: 198

The West Kimberley works from three main offices located at Broome, Derby and Fitzroy Crossing, and three remote locations (co-located with Western Australia Police) at Bidyadanga, Dampier Peninsula and Looma communities.

Most of our work is with Aboriginal families, often in a remote context.
1. A clear and rigorous understanding of the distinction between past harm, future danger and complicating factors.

2. A clear and rigorous distinction made between strengths and protection. Strengths need to be demonstrated as protection in relation to the danger, and over time.

3. Rendering all statements in straight-forward, rather than professionalized language, that can be readily understood by service recipients.

4. As much as possible all statements focus on specific, observable behaviours.

5. Skillful use of authority.

6. An underlying assumption that the assessment is a work in progress rather than a definitive set piece.

http://www.signsofsafety.net/
Signs of Safety Tools

- Mapping tools – 3 Columns
- 3 Houses
- Wizards and Fairies
- Words and Pictures

For further information visit the Signs of Safety or WA Child Protection Websites:

http://www.signsofsafety.net/
www.dcp.wa.gov.au
The Context – Disclosures of child sexual abuse
Recovery
Action plan for communities developed by the "Local Action Group" comprising of relevant government and non-government stakeholders. Focus on child and family safety, education on child abuse and overall family and community wellbeing.

Response
Joint investigations by WAPOL and CPFS.

Ongoing Community Building
Following on from the Recovery phase - actions that are community directed and supported through the Local Action Group.
Words and Pictures – Bringing the child’s voice to safety planning
Example of a child’s Words and Pictures used in Safety Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why everyone is worried.</th>
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</thead>
</table>

This is when I tried to hang myself and have tears.
Everyone is worried because people will try “be silly” with me. They worry I might hang myself. I tried this before cause I feel stressed. Help me and got me down from the rope. I still think about this when I feel stressed – no good. My family will know I feel this way cause my mum will have a feeling and will see in my eyes that I feel stressed.

My sister worry for me that I am in the house. I feel good. She put blanket on me and whisper in my ear that they outside have a party.

My biggest worry is when I sleep - that I might be rape.
Why I need a safety plan. If things don’t change what might happen?
What I am most worried about.

My Biggest worry is when I sleep I might be rape.
- "No Drink Beer and No Smoke Gunga around me".
- They have to mind me. (This means they have to watch over me and look for me).
- They have to ask me "Are you ok?" and if I say I feel stressed they should keep me close at home or take me fishing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I need to do to help keep me safe.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. No running off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If I want to go anywhere I have to tell mum. She will make sure that one of my safety network people takes me and picks me up and that there is a safe person to help watch over me at all times.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I need to tell a person on my safety network straight away if I feel no good or someone makes me feel no good.

3. If I don’t feel safe I will tell I will tell people on my safety hand. My safety people have to believe me and help make me safe.

Tell people on my Safety Hand.

My Safe people have to believe me and help make me safe.
The children talk about their Safety Plans

“My family and my sister help me to be safe”
What we are most proud of – Our Safety Planning for the children

- Planned Response
- Flexible
- Child Focused
- Working with the Community
- Collaborative

West Kimberley staff workshop the Words & Pictures safety plans.
Conclusion

With thanks to the children, families and communities and all of the West Kimberley agencies and services who have been a part of the work.