

CHILDAWARE APPROACHES CONFERENCE

Valuing, Protecting and Promoting Child Wellbeing

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FRAMEWORKS AND TOOLS FOR HAVING MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS WITH FAMILIES

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OUTLINE



- Introductions
- Background and rationale
- Developing the Parent Engagement Resource
- Trialling the PER
- The PER questions
- The PER as a practice framework
- Conclusions and reflections

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

- The conditions under which families are raising young children have altered dramatically over the past few decades
- While most families have benefited from these changes, some find the heightened demands of contemporary living and parenting overwhelming
- Despite continued growth in prosperity, there are more families experiencing multiple psychosocial problems
- These problems can compromise parenting and family functioning, resulting in worse outcomes for children

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

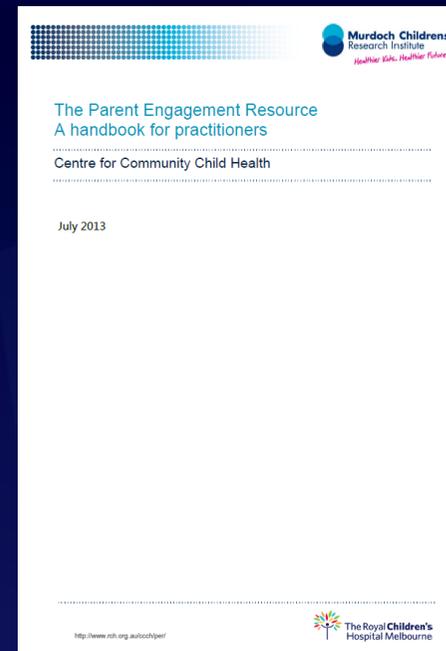
- However, most services for families with young children are designed to address presenting (or foreground) problems, rather than the background causal problems
- If nothing is done to help families address the background issues, our efforts to help them with their presenting problems will be less effective
- We currently don't have a way of finding out about and addressing these problems
- We need a systematic way of finding out what these are so that we can respond in a timely manner

DEVELOPING THE PARENT ENGAGEMENT RESOURCE

- In developing the PER, we used the Parents Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS) as a model
- The PEDS is a structured tool for eliciting parental concerns about their child's development and for deciding what action, if any, should be taken to address these
- Research on PEDS has confirmed the utility of and validity of a parent-based method to elicit parent concerns about child development
- The PER uses a similar parent-response format and a family-centred approach that avoids making judgements or apportioning blame, and gives parents control over the decisions made

PARENT ENGAGEMENT RESOURCE (PER)

The *Parent Engagement Resource* (PER) is designed to help practitioners who work with the families of young children to have meaningful conversations with families about psychosocial factors that may be compromising parenting and family functioning.



Centre for Community Child Health (2013). **The Parent Engagement Resource: A handbook for practitioners**. Parkville, Victoria: Centre for Community Child Health, Murdoch Childrens Research Institute and the The Royal Children's Hospital.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT RESOURCE (PER)



The PER aims to:

- support practitioners to develop effective partnerships with parents
- identify early the wide-ranging and complex psychosocial issues that impact on children
- sensitively and safely raise and discuss these issues, and
- help promote effective responses to any concerns raised

PARENT ENGAGEMENT RESOURCE (PER)

- The PER is a discussion tool embedded in a practice framework
- The **discussion tool** consists of a set of questions addressing potential psychosocial concerns, each question matched by a decision-making algorithm
- The **practice framework** describes the family-centred nature of the relationship between the practitioner and the parent.
- The PER uses a needs-based rather than risk-based approach – the actions taken are based upon needs identified by the parents, not risks identified by the professionals

TRIALING THE PER

PER Feasibility Study 2010/11

- This involved two groups of experienced Maternal and Child Health (MCH) nurses in Victoria
- Parent feedback regarding application of the tool as part of the MCH program was overwhelmingly positive
- MCH nurses agreed that the PER was an effective tool to engage parents, but were concerned about the time required

Developing the *Parent Engagement Resource*: a tool for enhancing parent–professional relationships and identifying psychosocial issues in families

Abstract

Early identification of parental concerns and linkage to appropriate community based support services is essential to facilitate better outcomes for children and their families. The *Parent Engagement Resource* was designed to enhance the development of the parent–practitioner relationship and to assist practitioners in the early identification of psychosocial issues that have an adverse effect on child health and wellbeing outcomes. This paper provides an overview of the work underpinning the development of the *Parent Engagement Resource*. Consultations with parents and professionals who work with parents of young children were undertaken and a feasibility study was conducted amongst a small number of maternal and child health nurses and their clients working in two local government areas in Victoria. The findings suggest that the *Parent Engagement Resource* is acceptable to parents. Parents were positive about their interactions with maternal and child nurses who utilized the resource. The tool appears to be useful for maternal and child health nurses, assisting them to engage parents in a conversation about concerns and issues in their lives. However, time constraints upon nurses appear to limit its applicability and for clients with multiple and complex problems the *Parent Engagement Resource* may not be appropriate. Further research is required to establish the effectiveness of the *Parent Engagement Resource* in universal and targeted services.

Introduction

Services continue to struggle with the engagement and retention of families. Those families that are especially difficult to engage are often those with the greatest needs and fewest resources, and their children are at greatest risk of poor outcomes in development, health and wellbeing (Bram 2010; Crane & Patel 2002; Offord 1987). There needs to be particular efforts made to develop ways of engaging and retaining contact with the most marginalised and vulnerable families, and making all aspects of the service system more equitable and inclusive (Carbone et al. 2004; Hertzman 2003a; Offord 2003).

One of the challenges facing practitioners is the issue of how to find and engage vulnerable families so as to help them make best use of the existing services. Early identification of psychosocial issues that have an adverse effect on child health and wellbeing

outcomes and linkage to appropriate community based support services is essential to facilitate good outcomes for children and their families.

The *Parent Engagement Resource*, developed by the Centre for Community Child Health and the Murdoch Children's Research Institute was designed to enhance the development of the parent–practitioner relationship and to assist practitioners who work with families in the early identification of psychosocial issues that have an adverse effect on child and health wellbeing outcomes.

In this paper the process that informed the development of the *Parent Engagement Resource* is described. The findings of a study that sought to ascertain the acceptability of the tool to parents and maternal and child health nurses, and its usability within the maternal and child health setting, is reported. The value of the *Parent Engagement Resource* as a means of enhancing the development of the parent–practitioner relationship and assisting in the early identification of psychosocial issues are discussed.

What is the *Parent Engagement Resource*?

The *Parent Engagement Resource* is a tool, consisting of a series of questions, that is designed to be used by professionals who work with parents of young children in order to enhance the development of the parent–practitioner relationship and to assist practitioners in the early identification of psychosocial issues that have an adverse effect on child health and wellbeing outcomes.

The questions within the resource are grouped according to the following life–span/health domains:

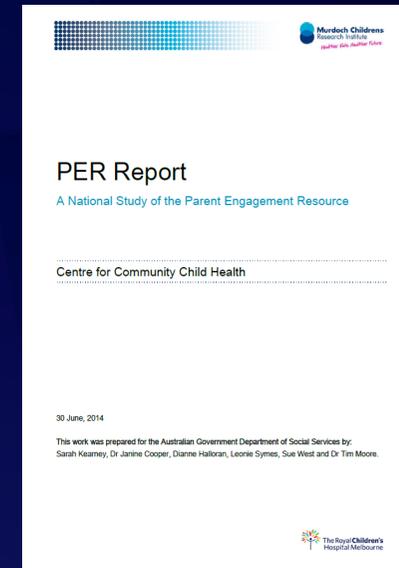
- child and adult physical health or disability
- child and adult mental health
- financial, housing or employment issues
- drug or alcohol use
- family relationships
- family violence
- child abuse and neglect
- the parents' concept of their parenting role.

Moore, T.G., Yagnik, P., Halloran, D., McDonald, M., Sayers, M., D'Souza, A. and Goldfeld, S. (2012). Developing the *Parent Engagement Resource*: A tool for enhancing parent / professional relationships and identifying psychosocial issues in families. *Australian Journal of Child and Family Health Nursing*, 9 (1), 12-16.

TRIALING THE PER (cont)

PER National Trial 2012-14

- This took the form of a cluster randomised trial conducted in disadvantaged localities across Australia
- The PER was effective in detecting psychosocial concerns, and filled a critical gap: the workers supporting families with complex needs in this study did not have access to a resource that systematically addresses the psychosocial factors that can compromise parenting.
- There was strong endorsement of the PER by the parents interviewed - all of them reported that they were pleased that they had been asked about their concerns



Kearney, S., Cooper, J., Halloran, D., Symes, L., West, S., & Moore, T. (2014). **A National Study of the Parent Engagement Resource: Final Report.** *Prepared for the Australian Government Department of Social Services.* Parkville, Victoria: The Royal Children's Hospital's Centre for Community Child Health and the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute.

TRIALING THE PER (cont)

The evidence from the two studies has provided answers to some questions:

- The PER is acceptable to parents
- There is no indication that it does any harm
- It can give parents gives parents new information about the impact of psychosocial issues on children, thereby helping the parents make more informed decisions regarding action
- It reframes relationships between professionals and parents in ways that can promote engagement and empower parents
- It gives professionals a way of asking the 'hard' questions
- It has value as a checklist, providing a systematic way of addressing the key psychosocial family concerns known to have an adverse effect upon children

EXERCISE 1

***How do you currently find out about
family psychosocial issues ?***

PARENT ENGAGEMENT RESOURCE (cont)

- The PER is a 16-item questionnaire, with two 'lead in' questions and two 'lead out' questions
- It addresses 12 psychosocial issues that are known to affect parental and/or family functioning and have an adverse affect upon child development and well-being
- Each of the 12 central questions focuses on parental concerns about the impact of the particular issue on the child or children
- The PER includes decision-making algorithms for each question to guide the professional in responding to parental concerns

THE PER QUESTIONS

Introductory Cluster

- 1. What are some of the things that you and your child/
baby enjoy together?*
- 2. What do you think you're good at, or do well as a
family/parent?*

THE PER QUESTIONS (cont)

Social Support Cluster

3. Every parent needs someone to talk to, to do things with, or to help out or to look after their child.

Do you have any concerns that your child is being affected because you don't have enough contact with or support from others?

4. We know that parenting is more difficult if you don't have enough money for everyday things such as food, clothing or bills.

*Other financial needs you may find more relevant to list: heating, transport, health care, school and leisure activities, bills or debt repayment.

Do you have any concerns that your child and family are being affected because there is not enough money such things?

THE PER QUESTIONS (cont)

Social Support Cluster (cont)

5. Raising a family can be difficult when you have problems with homelessness or housing. You might be worried about keeping your home or having to share your home, or having a house that's too crowded, or in need of repair.

Do you have any concerns that your child or family is being affected because of such problems with housing?

6. It's always worrying when someone in the family has problems finding or keeping a job, having insecure employment or a job that is not family-friendly.

Do you have any concerns that your child and family are being affected by such difficulties?

THE PER QUESTIONS (cont)

Parenting Cluster

7. Parenting can be more difficult if parents have any serious physical health issues or disabilities, such as chronic disease, child birth related issues, physical disability or caring for another person.

Do you have any concerns that your child and family are being affected by your own physical health or disability or that of another family member?

8. It's not unusual for parents to feel emotional, depressed, angry, anxious, exhausted or even have strange thoughts such as harming yourself or others.

Do you have any concerns that your child and family are being affected by you having any of these feelings?

THE PER QUESTIONS (cont)

Parenting Cluster (cont)

9. Being a parent involves loving and caring for your child, managing daily routines, meeting your child's physical and emotional needs, and managing your child's behaviour.

Do you have any concerns that your child is being affected by the way you and your partner manage these things?

10. We know that children's development can be disrupted or impaired by being neglected. This includes being left to look after themselves too much, not having their needs met, or being given too much responsibility for their age.

Do you ever have concerns that your child is being affected by any of these things?

THE PER QUESTIONS (cont)

Relationships Cluster

11. We have learnt that using drugs and alcohol can affect how well parents care for their children.

Do you have any concerns that your child is being affected because someone in your family is drinking alcohol or using drugs?

12. We have learnt that children's development can be affected or harmed by repeated disagreements or conflict between family and loved ones, which may be left unresolved.

Do you have any concerns that your child is being affected by conflict or tension between any members of the family?

THE PER QUESTIONS (cont)

Relationships Cluster (cont)

13. We have learnt that children's development can be affected or harmed by repeated exposure to frightening behaviour. This might be threats, bullying, yelling, screaming, putting people down, hitting, slapping, kicking, or punching.

Do you have any concerns that your child might be seeing or hearing behaviour that frightens them?

14. We have learnt that children's development can be badly affected by direct physical, emotional and sexual harm.

Do you ever have concerns that your child is being harmed or hurt by anyone?

THE PER QUESTIONS (cont)

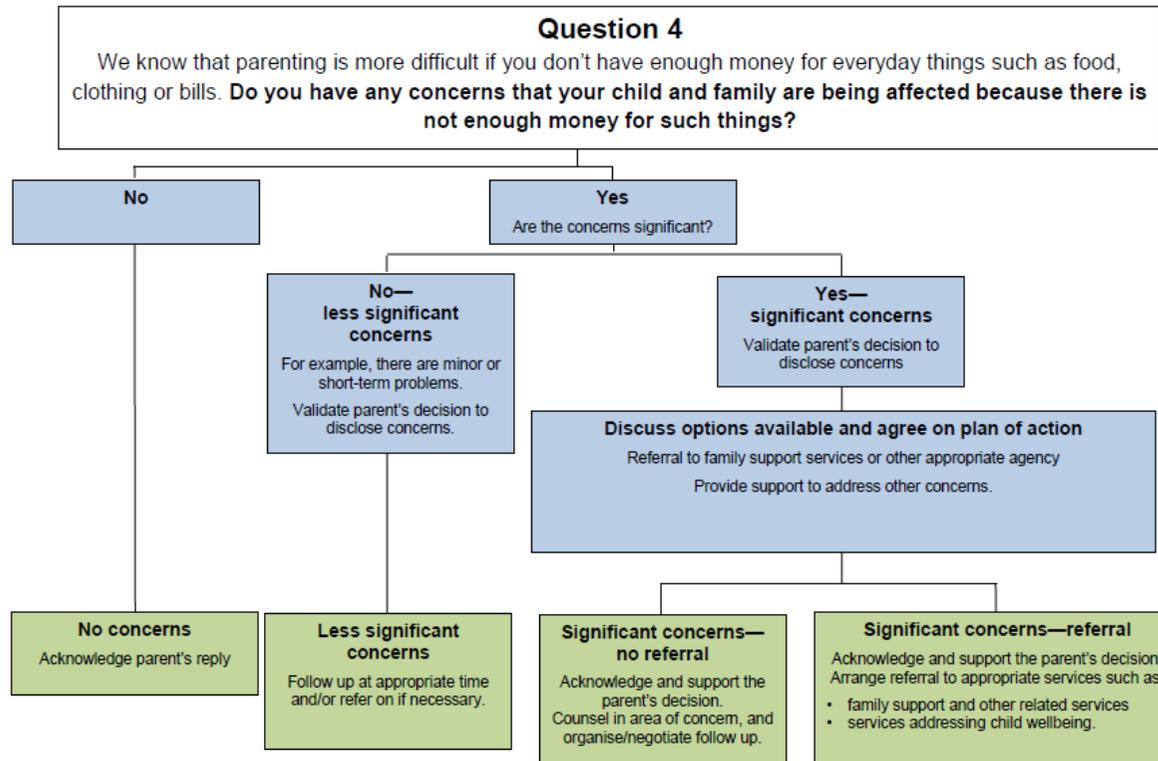
Closing Questions Cluster

- 15. Do you have any other concerns about your child's or family's wellbeing?*
- 16. Thinking about what would most make a difference to your child, if you could change one thing in your life or in your family, what would it be?*

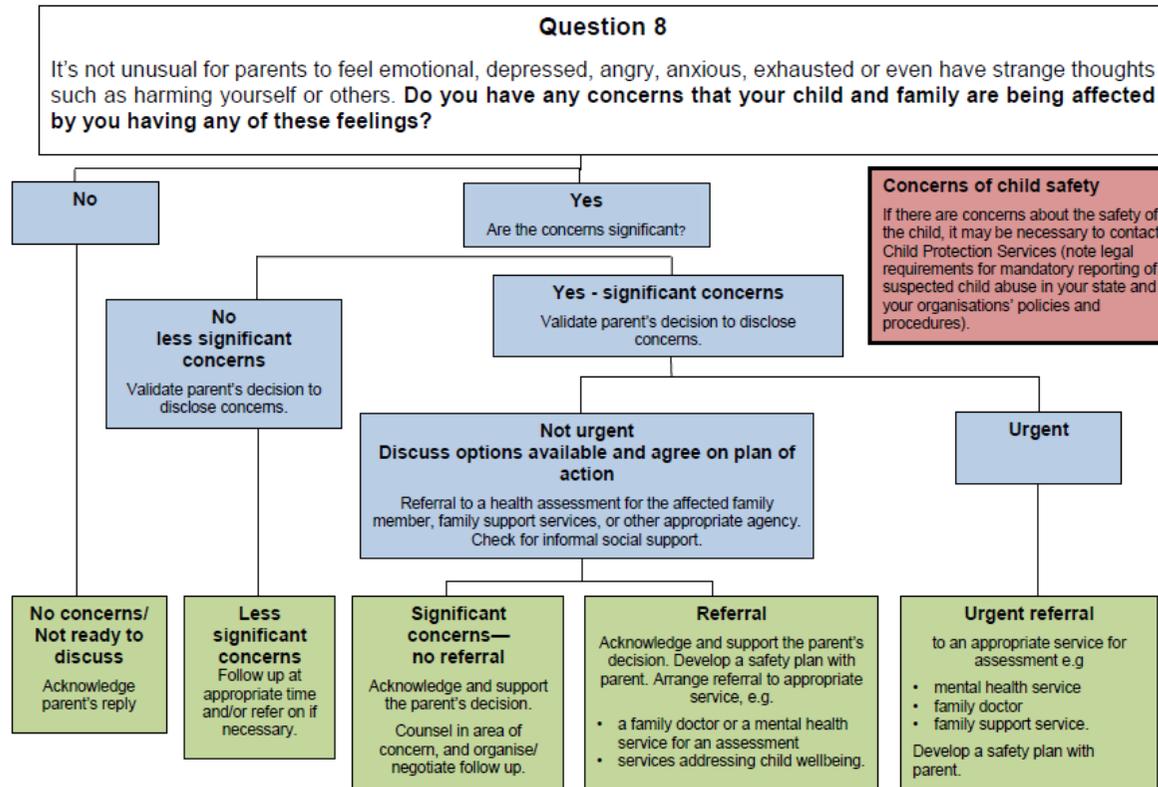
EXERCISE 2

Practising the PER questions

THE PER DECISION-MAKING ALGORITHMS



THE PER DECISION-MAKING ALGORITHMS (cont)



EXERCISE 3

Practising the PER decision-making algorithms

THE PER PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

The administration of the PER is based on three core practice principles and three core discussion tool principles

The three core practice principles are:

- Always ensure that the parent is in charge – the final decision about what action to take rests with the parent
- Always engage the parent with respect and responsiveness
- Always get feedback from the parents on whether these principles were observed

THE PER PRACTICE FRAMEWORK (cont)

The three core discussion tool principles are:

- Always use the question format and wording
- Always use the decision-making algorithm
- Always cover all questions at some stage

Provided these six principles are observed, the PER can be administered flexibly.



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