Improving Aboriginal Health

Belinda Stevens, Manager, Health Programs
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Engaging Aboriginal families

- Have an understanding of the local Aboriginal Community
- Willingness to learn about the local Aboriginal Culture
- Creating a cultural friendly environment
- Delivering service to Aboriginal family that are cultural sensitive
- Care extends to the health of families and communities as well as that of an individual
Early Years Cohort

• 8,101 Aboriginal children aged 0 – 8 years living in Victoria

• Approximately half of these children live in rural and regional areas of Victoria

• The growth in the Aboriginal early years cohort between Censuses was not uniform across Victoria

• Roughly 1000 Aboriginal babies are born each year in Victoria, and this number is expected to continue to grow.
Early Years Cohort

- There is a significant amount of evidence showing that many Aboriginal children are getting a good start in life.

- Data also shows that Aboriginal children face challenges many children in the non-Aboriginal population do not.

Aboriginal children in Victoria are more likely, than non-Aboriginal children to: live in one parent households, experience discrimination and racism in their daily life, have oral health and hearing problems, be subject to substantiated abuse, neglect or harm, and be on a care and protection order.
Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

- VACCHO is Victoria’s peak representative Aboriginal health body
- VACCHO advocates on behalf of members and assists communities in establishing sustainable Aboriginal Community Health Services.
- VACCHO supports 27 member organisations across the state
- VACCHO is not a service delivery organisation
Koori Maternity Strategy (KMS)

VACCHO dedicates the Koori Maternity Strategy team to supporting and enhancing Koori maternity care in Victoria.

- Funded by Victorian Department Of Health
- Part of mainstream Maternity Services Enhancement Program

- Currently have 14 Koori Maternity Services in Victoria, 11 of which are based in ACCHOs and 3 within hospitals
VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED HEALTH ORGANISATION

VACCHO

www.vaccho.org.au

VACCHO member organisations

- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service
- Aboriginal Community Elders Services
- Ngwala Willumbong Co-operative
- Melbourne Aboriginal Youth, Sports and Recreation Co-operative

Auspiced services
1. Central Gippsland Aboriginal Health Service
2. Kerang Aboriginal Community Centre
3. Swan Hill and District Aboriginal Co-operative
Koori Maternity Services (KMS)

• KMS teams generally consist of either an AHW or AHLO and a Midwife

• Deliver primary maternity care such as antenatal, pregnancy and postnatal care

• KMS are experts in Koori maternity and are leading the way in team based approaches to enhanced client-centred primary care during the perinatal period (up to around 6 weeks postnatal)
KMS Models of Care

Clinical-Linkage-Advocacy-Health promotion

Complimentary team
Combining of skills
Antenatal/Postnatal Primary Care Provider
Empowering of Aboriginal Health Workers role

Linkage-Advocacy-Health Promotion

Smaller Communities
Lower Birth Rates
Health Service Employs a Doctor
Good working relationships with mainstream
KMS Outcomes

- More women accessing antenatal care
- Accessing antenatal care earlier in pregnancy
- Positive relationships with mainstream services
- Services are flexible to meet the needs of Koori women
- Continuity of care has improved
- Low birth weights are improving
- Women are more familiar with the hospital before they birth
Feeding Our Future

In 2011, VACCHO and the Royal Childrens Hospital conducted an Aboriginal Early Childhood Nutrition & Physical Activity Needs Assessment Focus Groups with Aboriginal Parents and Health Workers included questions about MCH access

www.vaccho.org.au/nutrition
VACCHO Early Years Committee

The sub-committee was formed to ensure a co-ordinated approach to early years by VACCHO, which entails engaging key stakeholders and identifying opportunities to improve health outcomes of Aboriginal children and their families. As a result, a consultant was engaged to scope current Government policies and strategies relevant to Aboriginal early years and identify organisational and workforce development needs to meet identified targets. This report is being compiled and will help to determine priority areas.
Contact VACCHO

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Access to MCH services

• ‘People go: how much does she weigh now? I don’t know. I try at the supermarket with the vegies’ (parent)

• ‘The children that I have concerns about, there are scales in my car and I will weigh them but it’s not part of the program. Especially the girls who don’t engage very well with maternal and child health, at least it’s better that I weigh them than they’re not weighed but it isn’t my role.’ (practitioner)

• ‘That’s the vision that our maternal and child health nurse actually said when she left, that just like the midwife and the health worker work in KMS, to have a… health worker that has nutrition training and stuff like that working alongside a maternal and child health nurse’ (practitioner)