Supporting women's civic participation

Developing a meaningful client and community participation strategy at Women's Health West

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women's health west - active, effective and leading the region in advancing women's health, safety and wellbeing



Women's Health West (WHW)

- Women's health service for the western metropolitan region
 - Family violence services
 - Crisis housing, court support, case management, women's and children's counselling
 - Health promotion, Research and Development
 - Equity and Social Justice
 - Sexual and Reproductive Health
 - Mental Wellbeing and Social Connectedness
- Social model of health
- Feminist frameworks

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Supporting women's community participation

- Imperative for community & client/consumer participation
- Supporting women's community participation is paramount:
 - Gender-sensitive and responsive services
 - Integral for gender equity
 - Recognised in the UN Convention on all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Central to WHW's organisational philosophy & strategic vision



Women's *meaningful* community participation ... – Barriers and enablers

Whole of organisation approach

Inclusive approach

Variety of methods

Client/community capacity is supported Staff capacity is supported

Transparent processes

Targeted and purposeful participation Feedback to clients/community is provided

Adequate time for participation

Participation recognised as socially constructed

Diversity of experiences acknowledged Women enabled to share stories Commitment to process of participation

Safe, non-judgemental environment

Diversity of social locations recognised Local knowledge and experiences are privileged

Meaningful Participation

Gender inequity Women's oppression

Gendered stereotypes and social roles Experiences of family violence Knowledge and skills for participation Low confidence in ability to participate

Limited economic resources Childcare and family responsibilities Transport, financial and time limitations Motivation to participate Existing power relations

Past experiences of tokenism Language barriers

Agency resources and agenda

Client/community confidence Client/community knowledge/skills Culturally inappropriate participation methods

> Olassism, Ableism, Racism, Heterosexism, Sexism

Barriers

Enablers

Meaningful community participation Women's meaningful community participation

Women's Health West, 2012

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- Establishment of the Client & Community Participation (CCP) working group
- Development of a 'participation' definition:

'WHW values women's right to and realisation of participation as integral to equity and justice for women in the west. To achieve this, client and community participation at WHW is a process by which women are involved in the services, programs and organisation of Women's Health West as a whole, through viable and genuine decision-making and/or the ability to influence outcomes that are deemed meaningful to women, by women themselves'.

An audit of current participation initiatives at WHW



Preliminary community consultations - May 2012

What women need in order to participate at WHW

- Time to prepare
- Time to tell their stories
- Different options/methods for participating
- A shared understanding of what 'participation' at WHW is
- Knowledge of what opportunities are available at WHW
- Support around childcare responsibilities
- Supported capacity to
- actively participate





Staff workshop – November 2012

Part 1 - Exploring and understanding client and community participation

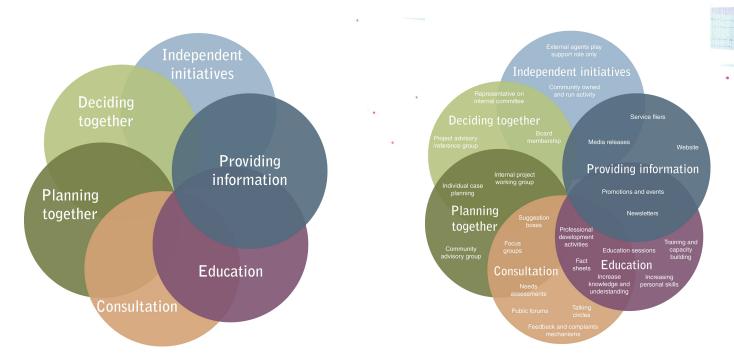
PARTICIPATION Having representation - specific groups Being involved seeing myself in the work - CACD Input Service speaks to the women - Diversity purposeful - tangible outcome. not just a talkest disrospectful giving back two-way report what influence was instresources @ With offical genuine honest about limitations (legislation, movey) talk about what you can back the providence was instresources about you can be descent indexed about limitations (legislation, movey) talk about what you can be descent in the providence was instresources about you can be descent in the providence was instresources about you can be descent in the providence was instructed about what you can be descent in the providence was instructed about what you can be descent in the providence was instresources about you can be descent in the providence was instructed about what you can be descent in the providence was instructed about what you can be descent in the providence was instructed about what you can be descent in the providence was instructed about what you can be descent in the providence was instructed about what you can be descent in the providence was instructed about what you can the providence was instructed about the providence was instructed about what you can the providence was instructed about the provi



Part 2 - Naming and recognising client & community participation at WHW

Spheres of participation

Spheres of participation



WHW, 2012 'Spheres of participation model' Adapted from frameworks developed by Homeground & Rural Housing Network (2008) & Canadian Manitoba Family Services and Housing (2008)



Part 2 - Naming and recognising client & community participation at WHW

Spheres of participation model

- Identifying participation
- Strengths
- Limitations
- Key considerations





Guiding principles for the CCP Strategy

Women's voices, knowledge and experiences are valued and privileged We recognise that women are the experts in their lives; we value and acknowledge women's knowledge and experiences and their contribution to our organisation and the wider community'.

'And then I expect that you are the expert and you come to tell me, and you know everything' (Community woman from South Sudan, OCOR participant, 2012).



Guiding principles for the CCP Strategy

Women's capacity to engage in participation is supported "We work to redress barriers to women's participation and to support the capacity of clients and community women to engage in participation opportunities at WHW. We also act to build the capacity of staff in supporting client and community participation'.

'She didn't have a place to leave her kids...things like that' (Community woman, Horn of Africa women's group, 2012).

'Otherwise we are just disempowering people again' (WHW staff member, 2012).



Guiding principles of the CCP Strategy

Diversity is valued and acknowledged

'We recognise and value women's diversity and their experiences. We also recognise that an inclusive approach to meaningful participation requires various participation methods and opportunities'.

'And it anybody finds it hard to talk at these kind of situations, then maybe they could write a letter, or an email' (Community woman - Sunrise program participant, 2012).

'One woman does not represent all women from that population group' (WHW staff member, 2012)



Guiding principles for the CCP Strategy

Meaningful client and community participation is timely We act to support participation that occurs at a time that is viable for clients and the community. We also recognise that meaningful participation requires sufficient time to explore and share ideas and concepts'.

'Its hard for me to answer quickly because I don't have that much education' (Community woman from South Sudan, 2012)

'Take into account women in crisis – timing is important' (WHW staff member, 2012)



- Further consultations with community women
- Explore consultations with clients
- 2013 staff workshop
- Refine goals, objectives and strategies
- Participate in a new regional network to support community engagement in the western region of Melbourne.

Thank you

References

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