

IMPROVING YOUNG PEOPLE’S SEXUAL HEALTH KNOWLEDGE IN RURAL AND REMOTE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

AUTHOR

Sue Arwen
Director, Clinical & Community Programs
SHine SA

OVERVIEW

In 2010, the Council of Australian Governments sought to improve the sexual and reproductive health outcomes of South Australian Aboriginal young people through education. Many of SA's Aboriginal people live in rural and remote areas with poor access to health, education, employment and welfare services resulting in the poorest sexual and reproductive health outcomes of any cultural group in Australia.

AIMS

The underpinning program logic, literature review and communication strategy set the approach the program would take to achieve its short term outcomes of an increased:

- level of knowledge and skills of the community
- capacity to recognise and foster respectful relationships
- use of contraception to assist in making choices about having children
- rate in testing for STIs

The longer term outcomes aim to contribute to:

- equity in health literacy
- equity in access to health services
- a reduced rate of teenage pregnancy
- a decreased prevalence in positive results for STIs
- a reduced incidence of sexual violence

THE YARNING ON PROGRAM

Yarning On is an effective sexual health education program for South Australian Aboriginal young people living in rural and remote areas. It takes into account the context in which it is delivered and is culturally appropriate, relevant to the lives and situations of young people, and has a multifaceted approach which is guided by the communities in which they live.

Evolving over six years, the program worked with rural and remote Aboriginal communities and agencies to develop a culturally appropriate education program and build the capacity of educators to address the knowledge gaps to reduce teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and sexual violence.

There are two programs: the **Aboriginal Focus Schools** program and the **Investing in Aboriginal Youth** program. Both have supporting resources and programs developed in partnership with Anangu and Aboriginal people and agencies.

ABORIGINAL FOCUS SCHOOLS PROGRAM

Builds the capacity of teachers and Aboriginal school staff to deliver comprehensive sexual health and relationship education to students in Years 5–10.

INVESTING IN ABORIGINAL YOUTH PROGRAM

Builds the capacity of community and health workers and Aboriginal communities to work with young people outside of the school system. This program uses a peer education model to address sexual health and relationship education.

TOPICS INCLUDE

Sexual health and sexuality
Values and beliefs
Relationships
Gender and diversity
Family violence
Sex and the law
Child sexual abuse
Safer sex
The body
Contraception
Negotiating condom use
Pregnancy options
Sexually transmitted infections

← Supporting Resources →

COMMUNITY VOICE AND PARTNERSHIPS

Community support, approval and participation was important to ensure the program would be culturally appropriate, acceptable and relevant for the setting in which people lived. This was done at both an agency and official level and at the community level. The support and approval from the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee enabled the program to be developed and delivered on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands.

“ They had people from all over the community could come and join it, so if parents wanted to join it ... if parents wanted to see what was happening at the training, they could quite happily, it was important, because that way it was approved.

EVALUATION

Evaluation through the South Australian Community Health Research Unit (SACHRU) found the program successful in meeting its short term goals.

“ Our evaluation findings suggest that Yarning On processes are building significant capacity among individuals, organisations and communities to promote sexual health, well-being and safety for young Aboriginal people. This has been achieved through the training and resources provided by each program, and the relationships and partnerships which developed through both streams of Yarning On. We found evidence that Yarning On has made significant progress in achieving all the short term outcomes.

PROGRAM DELIVERY

