



Becoming Gender Responsive: A workshop on engaging women accessing AOD services

APSAD Conference 1 November 2016



Welcome

Context to the Women's resource

Aims of this workshop

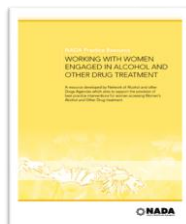
1. Explore women's experiences of AOD use and treatment
2. Present best practice approaches for engaging women
3. Provide opportunities explore actions that might contribute to a more gender responsive organisation





The Women's AOD Services Network and the Hon. Pru Goward,
December 2015

Become an Associate Member!



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Women in AOD Treatment

Creating an enabling environment: best practice approaches

Improving access and retention

Pregnancy and parenting

Building strong partnerships

Organisational change and self care

Resources and guidelines



Women's Experiences: Use

The Australian context

- Accessibility
- Consumption norms
- Societal perceptions

"Women appear to be seeking and entering treatment for their substance use at lower rates than men and when they are older, at rates that are disproportionate to their likely level of need."
(NADA 2015)



Brainstorm

- ***What impacts on ACCESS and RETENTION of women in AOD treatment?***
- **Lets' explore.....**



Complex Contributing Factors

- **Mental Health**
- **Personal relationships**
- **Lack of education/work opportunities and homelessness**
- **Criminal justice issues**
- **Cognitive impairment**
- **Multiple and complex trauma histories**



Being Gender Responsive

Aiming to understand and address issues experienced by women and creating an environment that reflects these understandings through approach and treatment options.



“Gender shapes substance use and misuse in relation to initiation, access, consumption, experiences of dependence, AOD-related risk behaviours and AOD treatment outcomes” (NADA 2015)



From the frontline.....



- Pharmacotherapy
- Parenting Issues
- Complexity of presentations
- Physical health and reproductive health
- Housing issues
- New cohorts: Older women
- Domestic Violence



Creating Enabling Environments

Components of treatment that create an enabling environment for women:

- 1. access to childcare**
- 2. access to prenatal care**
- 3. access to women-only programs**
- 4. psychoeducational session topics that focus on women**
- 5. mental health interventions**
- 6. comprehensive services that offer multiple components**



Trauma Informed Care/Practice

- Safety
- Trustworthiness
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Empowerment

“the message from the frontline is that a good understanding of trauma and its ongoing effects on women and their children is essential for all workers in AOD treatment settings.”
(NADA 2015)



Family Inclusive Practice

A family inclusive or family sensitive approach, recognises the possibility of harnessing constructive support from family members

“All workers are capable of generating practical ideas for the way your service operates that will improve the quality of life for family, carers, clients and other workers.”
(Bouverie Centre 1998).

Work towards linking women into networks of support outside of treatment



Strengths Based Approach

“offers a different language.....It allows one to see opportunities, hope and solutions rather than just problems and hopelessness.”

“Avoids labelling, casting service providers as partners rather than as experts, authorities, initiators and directors of the change process.” (Hammond 2010)

Genuine hopeful relationships

Diversity as strength



Activity time....

Starting the organisational change process...

In considering the questions below think about some practical ways of shaping change at the **program, organisational** and **environmental** levels...

1. *What 2 things does your organisation do really well in terms of being gender responsive?*
2. *What activity/intervention do you do in your organisation you might enhance to be gender responsive?*



Consider...

- *What language do you use?*
- *What best practices approaches are used in your organisation? Could any of these be enhanced?*
- *Do clients at your service describe it as a safe place?*
- *Do you attend to sexual and reproductive health?*
- *Are respectful relationships and FDV explored across your service?*
- *Is parenting explored across your service?*
- *What partnerships with stakeholders and service providers do you have/need to develop?*
- *Do you talk about how gender impacts on service provision as a team/organisation? In supervision?*
- *Do you ask the women accessing service what it is they need?*



Most importantly....

*"If you do nothing else in the course of your important work alongside these courageous women, simply **acknowledge the achievement they have made in finding their way to you**"*

(NADA 2015)

Value and promote self care, health and wellbeing of the workforce





Wrap up and discussion

What is one thing that you will take away from today?

Making a plan and putting it into action.....think:

- **Program focus**
- **Organisational focus**
- **Environmental focus**

Be the catalyst for change!

Thank you

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