

Session Two: Strengthening families through neighbourhood service networks – Connecting to our strengths and the evidence base

Featured Keynote presentation by Professor Ross Homel and Dr. Kathryn Freiberg ~

Science to Service: Pathways to Evidence-Based Preventive Practice for the Early Years

Ross Homel is Foundation Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia, and Director of the Griffith Institute for Social and Behavioural Research, a multi-centre network of 200 researchers. He has published three monographs and six edited collections on the prevention of crime and violence and the promotion of positive human development, as well as more than one hundred peer-reviewed papers and numerous high impact government reports. His accomplishments were recognised in January 2008 when he was appointed an Officer in the General Division of the Order of Australia (AO) “for service to education, particularly in the field of criminology, through research into the causes of crime, early intervention and prevention methods.”

Kathryn Freiberg is Senior Research Fellow and co-director of the Prevention and Developmental Pathways Program within the Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance at Griffith University. She is a developmental psychologist who has a broad interest in young children’s social, cognitive and perceptual development. Her interest in the theory and practice of applying preventive interventions in community settings includes a particular focus on the effectiveness of home-school-community group partnerships in the promotion of positive outcomes for children.

Abstract

Empirical evidence from prevention programs such as the Perry Preschool Project and the Elmira Prenatal/Early Infancy Project demonstrates positive short- and long-term effects. Meta-analytic reviews of early interventions demonstrate good returns on investment well beyond the early years, into and beyond adolescence. Benefits include improvements in educational success, cognitive development, social participation, social-emotional development, and family well-being; as well as reductions in social deviance and involvement in the criminal justice system. However, turning the promise of these lighthouse projects into routine practice within human service organisations, schools and communities has proven challenging, so much so that the evidence-based movement is in danger of faltering: typically routine services have been found to be inconsistent, often ineffective, and sometimes harmful to consumers. In this paper we explore the evidence base in the context of what we know about healthy human development, and address the challenges involved in implementing and disseminating efficacious prevention strategies.

(Refer to Child & Family Plan: Strengthening families through neighbourhood service networks, pages 15 – 18)

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Presentation 5: Using the Plan to strengthen families and create engaging service networks

Presenters:

Tanya James, Blue Mountains City Council (Child and Family Plan: Part A lead agency)

Dianne Jackson, Connect Child and Family Services (Hub program joint lead agency with Gateway Family Services)

A presentation about the outcomes supporting the Child and Family Plan Part A: Strengthening families through neighbourhood service networks and the Alliance's School Centred Community Hub program. (10 minutes)

(Refer to Child and Family Plan: Strengthening families through neighbourhood service networks, pages 27 – 31)

Part A: Strengthening families through neighbourhood service networks

Outcome 1: Parents nurture their child's ongoing development from the prenatal period onwards

Outcome 2: Children come to school with the skills and abilities necessary to achieve in the school environment

Outcome 3: Parents increase their social supports and community connections

Outcome 4: Collaborative, universal service systems are created at a neighbourhood level through School Centred Community Hub steering committees

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Activity 3: Imagining new possibilities for our work

Step one:

(10 minutes)

(a) For the following three questions write your responses in the space provided.

(b) If you and your partner finish early, briefly discuss your answers with each other.

1. What most excited you about the presentations?

2. What are you already doing in your work that can be built on or done differently?

3. What other possibilities does this open up for your work / your sector's work?

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Activity 3: Imagining new possibilities for our work (continued)

Step two:

(20 minutes)

(a) Your table facilitator will assist your group to discuss and record on butcher's paper answers to the following questions.

4. What excited the table most about the presentations? (5 minutes)

5. What possibilities have been opened up for the table? (15 minutes)

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Activity 3: Imagining new possibilities for our work (continued)

Step three:

(15 minutes)

(a) To answer question six, pick one possibility from the results of question five that lots of people at your table are excited by and could contribute to. (5 minutes)

(b) To answer question seven, prepare a quick report back to the room about your chosen possibility. (10 minutes)

6. Which possibility for new practice to strengthen families most inspires your table?

7. Prepare a report back to the room that answers the following 3 questions:

- a. What possibility are you reporting back?
- b. How does the possibility benefit children and/ or families / communities?
- c. What partnerships would bring the possibility to life?

Feedback!!

The data analysis team will look over all the results from question seven above and report back some of the ideas to the room. All possibilities will be available on the Stronger Families Alliance website after the Summit.