



Koori Child Annual Health Assessment: Dianella Community Health Service

Dianella Community Health (DCH) has built on its existing relationship with the Victorian Prep-12 College of Koori Education (VCKE - Glenroy Campus) to establish a School Docs Clinic on campus that aims to provide an annual health assessment to all students aged 5 to 18 years old.

Need for medical care

Dianella's community health nurse, Maree Kendall, worked with the school for 2 years on Health Promotion programs. Teachers identified many health issues that they had to cope with during a Needs Analysis session held in conjunction with Dianella.

The school reported that they had to try to get students to be seen by local private medical practices however this was not always successful due to appointment times etc.

Many students reported that they could not recall seeing a general practitioner and therefore had not had a medical examination for many years.

DCH and VCKE agreed that an on-campus clinic would be the best way of enhancing access to primary health services and comprehensive bulk-billed health assessments, whilst also encouraging students to make use of the ATSI Annual Health check which continues throughout the lifespan.

Dianella GP Dr Alethea Dwyer, who also works part-time at the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service in Fitzroy, was approached and agreed to work a four-hour session fortnightly in partnership with the nurse and school to provide health assessments, health education and minor treatment to students.

Trust and cultural safety

Students and their families had had little contact with the health system and reported they did not feel comfortable approaching existing providers. Ensuring the school-based clinic was culturally safe and youth-friendly was seen as critical. The nurse researched other 'Docs in Schools' projects and discussed plans with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service. She also rang the Medicare Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Access Line (1800 556 955) to discuss the MBS items.

Before proceeding, a Memorandum of Understanding with VCKE – Glenroy Campus was agreed and a policies and procedures manual was put in place to govern operations and minimise risks.

Establishing the clinic in the school was a joint project between the school and Dianella Community Health, with each contributing ideas as well as furniture and equipment. Cultural safety was assured through a number of policies and procedures, for example:

- the doctor's door is left open on request of students;
- students can attend appointments with siblings or friends so they feel secure
- students were free to walk between the doctor's and nurse's rooms or in and out of the clinic at any time;
- parents were encouraged to come to see the clinic and meet the providers;
- students' art was placed on the walls and the rooms were decorated with cushions and bright, warm colours.
- Health Information from VACCHO and VAHS is provided in the waiting area
- The Community Health Nurse assists in filling out the psycho-social questionnaire with the student

Services and viability

Thirty-eight health assessments were delivered to students and billed to Medicare from April to December 2007 (#708: 28, #710: 10), as well as thirty-five bulk billing incentive items (#10990). Following the health assessments, many students received minor treatment at the school (enabling the clinic to also bill standard GP consultation items) and some students are brought into the community health service for additional services. Allied health providers also visited the school to provide services to students.

Paper-based records are taken back to Dianella to be scanned into client files by administrative staff, which also process Medicare billing.

Dianella estimates that it costs \$520.00 per session for the GP, nurse and administrative staff, including on-costs. This means that if 3 three health assessments per session were billed (and bulk-billing incentive items claimed) they would be covering all costs, notwithstanding the five hundred dollars that was spent to decorate the clinic.

Enablers

- A three year investment into building relationships with the school and the local Koori community and building trust with students and parents.
- The commitment of the school and health providers and administrative staff at Dianella
- Planning a culturally safe clinic
- Being able to utilise health promotion funding to plan the service
- The MBS items proved financially viable and helped to provide some guidance regarding components of the assessments
- Finding a GP with experience working with Koori clients

Challenges

- Establishing trust with the school, students, parents and the wider Koori community
- Obtaining consent from the appropriate carer (the child's parent, guardian or teacher). A consent form that indicated verbal parental consent accompanied by the signature of a teacher was helpful.
- Not having initial access to computers (including medical software) was inefficient
- The lack of a practice nurse to support the school clinic in elements of assessment and follow up meant that the role of the community health nurse was stretched.

Next Steps

Dianella is now seeking to employ a part-time practice nurse to assist the GP and health promotion nurse at the school. It is believed this will assist both in providing more follow up services at the school (including care planning), and in enhancing the viability of the service. The service has also purchased laptops and is establishing a 3G internet connection at the school to enable clinical notes to be entered directly onto laptops at the school and then transmitted to electronic clinical files at Dianella's main campus.

With thanks to Maree Kendall and Ros Borg.