

SUPPORTING VIETNAMESE FAMILIES



A report on the development of a culturally appropriate service model for implementation by family support agencies to increase access to services by Vietnamese Families in the City of Whitehorse

October 2002

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1 Executive Summary

The Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne) (MIC) received funding from the City of Whitehorse Community Grants Program 2001/2002 to complete a research project entitled “Culturally Appropriate Family Support for Vietnamese Families in the City of Whitehorse”. A Vietnamese bilingual Project Officer was employed to undertake the project from March 2002 to September 2002 with the support of a Steering Committee with representation from local family support agencies.

There were three components to the project:

- Consulting the Vietnamese community to develop a culturally appropriate service model for family support agencies to implement to better meet community needs and increase access to services by Vietnamese families,
- Identifying the training needs of family support workers and developing and facilitating a cross cultural training program on Vietnamese culture and settlement, and
- Developing a structure for more collaborative work practices between ethnic specific workers and family support service providers.

1.1 KEY FINDINGS

1.1.1 Culturally Appropriate Service Model

To implement the service model and increase access by families in crisis from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, family support agencies need to:

- Increase community awareness of family support services and how they can assist them through regular promotion in ethnic media including promotion of the confidentiality of the service.
- Create a welcoming environment through displaying posters that reflect diversity and signs of welcome in community languages in reception areas and offices.
- Target communities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in partnership with ethnic specific agencies and provide parenting education programs that cover child development, discipline and information about family law and child protection.
- Overcome language and cultural barriers through increasing staff understanding and respect for cultural diversity, utilising professional interpreters and developing and implementing a bilingual recruitment policy that reflects the demographics of families within the catchment area.
- Utilise a strengths based approach to family therapy that recognises and acknowledges the strengths in diverse cultures and traditions.

1.1.2 Cross Cultural Training Programs

A training program was developed and piloted as part of the project to increase the knowledge and understanding of staff from family support agencies of family culture and traditions as well as settlement issues faced by families from Vietnamese backgrounds. Participants indicated a high level of satisfaction with the program. In addition, they identified the need for the MIC to:

- Develop and facilitate a follow-up session that enabled participants to practice using interpreters and engaging and working with families in a culturally appropriate way.
- Develop and facilitate similar programs for families from other culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to reflect the demographics of the region.
- Encourage family support staff including reception staff to attend these sessions.

1.1.3 Collaborative Work Practices with Ethnic Specific Agencies

Ethnic specific agencies play an important role in increasing the access of families in crisis from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to family support services. As generalist workers, they are often not in a position to provide intensive support to families in crisis. There is a need for ethnic specific agencies to develop formal partnerships with family support services and networks with colleagues in other ethnic specific agencies.

To increase access to family support services and to strengthen the work of ethnic specific agencies, the project found that:

- The MIC needs to establish an ethnic specific network that meets regularly to provide opportunities for professional development, casework presentations and debriefing.
- Ethnic specific agencies need to advise clients of their role and the services available through family support agencies for families in crisis.
- Family support agencies and ethnic specific agencies need to establish protocols that enable workers to contact their local agency for secondary consultations as required.
- Ethnic specific agencies and the MIC need to establish partnerships with local family support services to develop protocols for appropriate referral of families in crisis.

2 Introduction

In 1999, the Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne) (MIC) undertook a needs analysis of migrant communities in the Eastern Region of Melbourne.¹ Our research indicated that families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds did not access family support services unless they were referred through the child protection system. In addition, many CALD communities were unaware of available youth and family support services and how these services could help them.

A further discussion with the MIC's Migrant Communities Advisory Group² indicated that people from CALD backgrounds would be more likely to access culturally appropriate family support services if agencies employed bilingual workers or utilised interpreter services and understood their cultural values and backgrounds, particularly where they contradicted Australian laws and values.

3 Background

To address the issues identified in the needs analysis and by the Migrant Communities Advisory Group, the MIC in collaboration with Reach Out for Kids, Louise Multicultural Community Centre, Anglicare - Parentzone and Birralee – Box Hill Hospital received funding from the City of Whitehorse to facilitate a project targeting the Vietnamese community in Whitehorse.

The Vietnamese community was selected because according to the 2001 Census data, 28% (1650) of the Vietnamese population in the Eastern Region resided in the City of Whitehorse with approximately 28% (1633) of the total population in the Eastern Region under 19 years of age. These figures indicated the high percentage of families with dependent children residing in region.

The project entitled “Culturally Appropriate Family Support for Vietnamese Families” involved three components:

- Consulting the Vietnamese community to develop a culturally appropriate service model for family support agencies to implement to better meet community needs and increase access to services by Vietnamese families,
- Identifying the training needs of family support workers and developing and facilitating a cross cultural training program on Vietnamese culture and settlement, and

¹ The needs analysis was documented in the report “Making a Future” which is available on the MIC's web site www.miceastmelb.com.au.

² The Migrant Communities Advisory Group was established in 1999 with representatives from a range of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The primary purpose of the group was to identify issues for migrant communities and provide feedback on the MIC's work.

- Developing a structure for more collaborative work practices between ethnic specific workers and family support service providers.

This report includes a recommended service model for implementation by family support agencies, a description and evaluation of the training program and recommendations for collaborative work processes between family support agencies and ethnic specific workers.

4 Methodology

A Vietnamese bilingual Project Officer was employed part-time over 6 months to facilitate the project. The Project Officer completed a literature review and held consultations with Vietnamese parents, family support workers and ethnic specific workers.³ Interviews were also conducted with workers from family support agencies in the South Eastern and Western Regions who provided services targeted at Vietnamese families.

The consultation with Vietnamese parents identified issues for families particularly in regards to parenting and key factors for increasing access to family support services by Vietnamese families. The information from families formed the basis for the development of the proposed service model.

The consultation with family support agencies identified their training requirements and formed the basis for developing the cross cultural training program. In addition, the Project Officer consulted the Inner Western Migrant Resource Centre and South East Alcohol and Drugs Service Dandenong for information on existing Vietnamese cross cultural training programs which were utilised in the development of the program where appropriate.

Lastly, a meeting was held with ethnic specific workers who support migrant communities in the Eastern Region. Workers identified the issues affecting their work with families in crisis and the networks and support they require from family support agencies to provide a quality service. The information received from this meeting followed by discussions with managers from family support agencies was used to develop recommendations for supporting ethnic specific workers in their work with families in crisis from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

³ The reports from these consultations are available at the MIC.

5 Culturally Appropriate Service Model for Family Support Services

Vietnamese families require support for a range of reasons. The most common reasons relate to the breakdown in traditional roles in the family, conflict between Australian Family Law including Child Protection and Vietnamese culture and the different rates of acculturation between grandparents, parents and children.⁴ A major challenge for support workers involves balancing Vietnamese cultural expectations of seeking expert advice and empowering people to make their own decisions to resolve family conflict within the family support paradigm.

The process for developing a culturally appropriate service model for family support agencies included:

- Interviews with service providers in mainstream family support agencies who provide services to Vietnamese families throughout Melbourne,
- A promotion of the project and discussion of family support services on SBS radio,
- Consultation with Vietnamese families in the City of Whitehorse to identify their cultural needs and the key success factors for the delivery of family support services, and
- Interviews with service providers in family support services in the City of Whitehorse to identify their needs for providing services to ethnic communities.

Drawn on the recommendations made by Vietnamese families and the existing service models used by family support agencies in other regions, a culturally appropriate family support service model for Vietnamese families has been developed and will be recommended to family support agencies in the City of Whitehorse. Detailed below are the results of the consultation process that have contributed to the model.

5.1 Service models in other regions

As part of our research for the project, interviews were conducted with bilingual staff at one agency that resourced a unit to target Vietnamese families and three other local government service providers who employed bilingual Vietnamese workers within the family support team to target and support Vietnamese families.

Centacare, Catholic Family Welfare Services in Footscray has a Vietnamese Family Support Unit that includes three Vietnamese speaking staff specialising in working with Vietnamese families. They provide family support for Vietnamese families through

⁴ See Chapter on Youth and Family Support in “Making a Difference” (MIC:1999) on the MIC’s website www.miceastmelb.com.au.

family casework and parenting group programs held at the agency and in targeted schools. Centacare publish brochures and forms in a range of languages including Vietnamese.

The unit exceeds the annual target number of Vietnamese families each year and more and more Vietnamese families are seeking assistance from non-Vietnamese workers at the agency in preference to waiting for support from the Vietnamese unit, which has high demand. It appears that once people understand how a service can help them, the need for a worker from the same background becomes less of a priority.

Family support services in the Cities of Greater Dandenong, Mooney Valley and Melbourne, as well as Anglicare in Werribee employ Vietnamese bilingual workers within their family support team as there are high populations of Vietnamese families residing in their catchment areas. However, they do not produce information brochures about their services in languages other than English nor promote their services to ethnic communities due to the high demand for services and funding constraints.

5.2 Needs of Vietnamese families

The consultation meeting with Vietnamese families in the City of Whitehorse was held on the 1st May 2002 with 22 Vietnamese parents – 18 men and 4 women. They were asked to identify parenting issues for families and what family support services would need to do to encourage families to access their services.

The major issues faced by Vietnamese parents were identified as:

- Language and cultural barriers for accessing services including family support services,
- Difficulties in parenting their children due to their lack of knowledge on alternatives aside from physical punishment for disciplining children,
- Lack of understanding of child development, and
- Fear of penalties by Police and the legal system particularly husbands and fathers if they quarrel with their wife or smack their disobedient children.

Major factors identified to better meet the cultural needs of Vietnamese families included:

- Promoting services provided by agencies on a regular basis such as quarterly through Vietnamese media especially SBS radio,
- Translating brochures into Vietnamese and distributing them to Vietnamese community groups and organisations,
- Ensuring confidentiality and promoting the confidentiality of the service to the Vietnamese community,

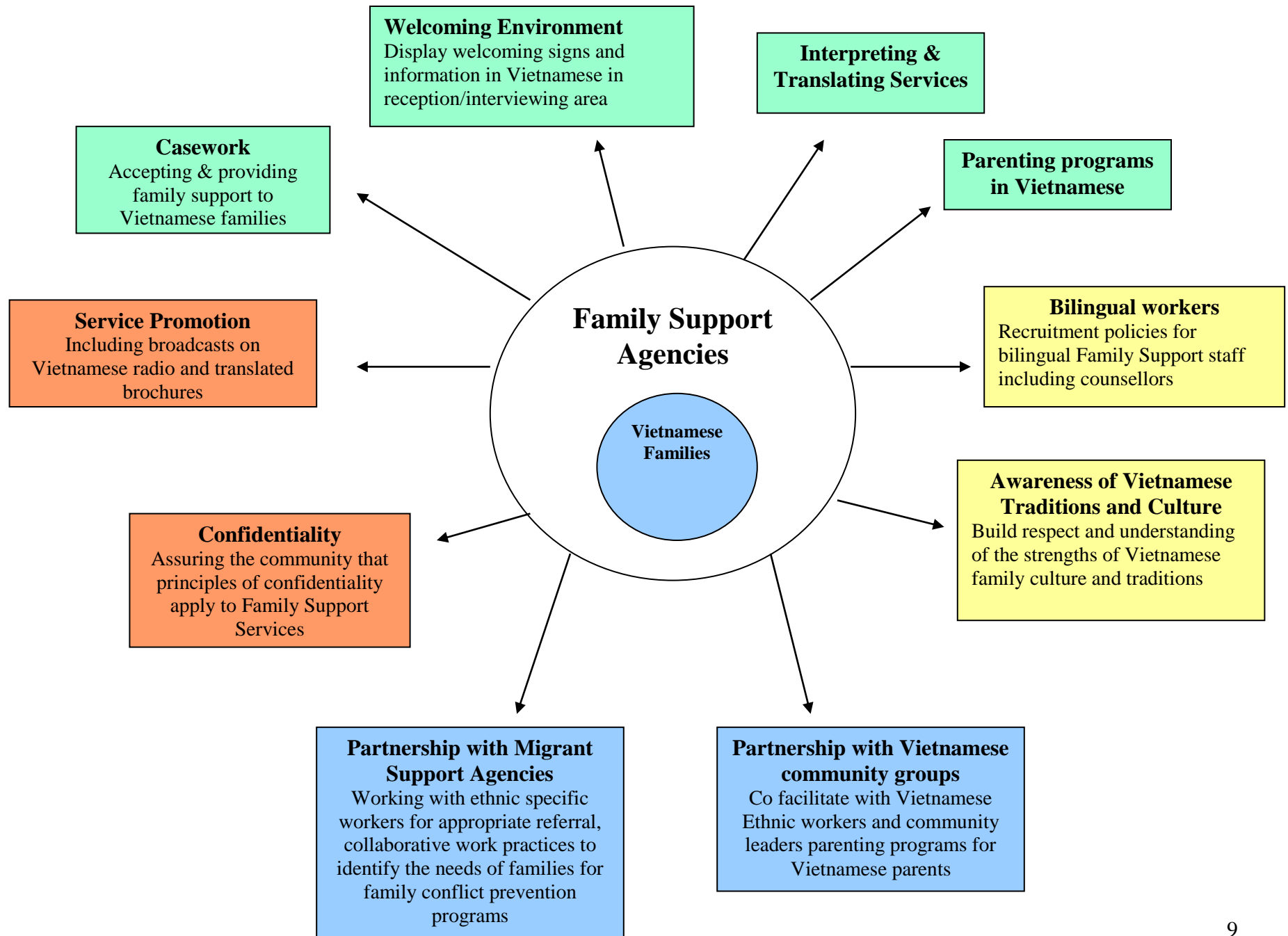
- Recruiting professional Vietnamese bilingual family support workers and family counsellors or using professional interpreters,
- Understanding of Vietnamese culture and traditions by service providers, and
- Providing a welcoming environment and attitude towards Vietnamese clients.

5.3 Culturally appropriate service model

In view of the information collected from agencies in other regions and Vietnamese families in the City of Whitehorse, the major factors that need to be addressed to develop a culturally appropriate service model (see Figure 1) include:

- Increasing community awareness of family support agencies in the City of Whitehorse and the services they can provide,
- Assuring the community that principles of confidentiality apply to the service,
- Overcoming language and cultural barriers,
- Creating a welcoming environment for Vietnamese families, and
- Providing group programs for Vietnamese parents in the City of Whitehorse as well as casework services.

Figure 1- Culturally Appropriate Service Model



5.3.1 Service promotion

In response to the identified need of raising the awareness of Vietnamese families of family support services, at the commencement of the consultation with Vietnamese families, Ruth Barr from Reach Out for Kids (ROK) provided a general overview of family support services, the specific services provided by ROK and how they can assist families.

The participants were generally unaware of family support services and indicated that now that they understood they were more likely to access them if the need arose in their family. This is consistent with the outcome of the promotion of the project and family support services on SBS radio conducted by the Project Officer. Following the broadcast, calls were received from families asking where they could access family support services in their local area.

Participants identified that regular⁵ service promotion by family support agencies particularly on Vietnamese radio would be an important forum for increasing community awareness of the services and to discuss how the services can assist families. Another forum for promoting services included distribution of translated information brochures to local Vietnamese community groups and organisations.⁶

5.3.2 Confidentiality

The principles of confidentiality were explained by Ruth Barr in her overview of family support services and further emphasised by the discussion group as a major influence for accessing services.

Many ethnic communities have stories of situations where confidentiality has not been observed particularly in smaller newly emerging communities. The reasons offered for breaches of confidentiality often relate to situations where:

- Professional interpreters are not available and people rely on other community members,
- Service providers do not use professional interpreters appropriately, and
- Non-professional bilingual workers are employed by agencies and they do not understand the principles of confidentiality.

Families need reassurance that confidentiality strictly applies within the agency including to professional interpreters and bilingual workers. The principles of confidentiality should be included as part of the service promotion.

⁵ Participants suggested that services be promoted to the community at least every six months.

⁶ For a step by step guide for promoting services to culturally and linguistically diverse communities see the MIC's web site on www.miceastmelb.com.au.

5.3.3 Overcoming language and cultural barriers

The consultation with the families indicated that language is a major determinant of whether people can access mainstream services and their experiences when they first approach agencies for assistance is critical. To ensure that services can be provided to all people within the community, agencies need to implement policies for working with people from non-English speaking backgrounds, utilise the interpreting budget available for family support agencies funded by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and obtain funding for translation costs.

In relation to cultural barriers, prior to the commencement of the project, the MIC's Migrant Communities Advisory Group identified the need for family support agencies to understand the values, traditions and culture of families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. More particularly, they identified the need for workers to understand where their beliefs conflicted with Australian laws and practices.

This need for workers to understand Vietnamese culture was reinforced through the consultation with both parents and service providers. To reduce cultural barriers for accessing services, staff need to understand Vietnamese culture and traditions and respect the existing strengths within Vietnamese families.

It is essential that family support workers understand the strengths of Vietnamese values and practices such as “filial piety” between children and their parents and supportive roles and responsibilities within the family before they provide support particularly counselling to Vietnamese families. Counselling approaches that attribute “dysfunction” to the Vietnamese way of life and the need to fix it by encouraging families to adapt to the Australian way of life are bound to fail and be interpreted by the community as a cultural barrier and lack of understanding and respect for Vietnamese culture.

5.3.4 Welcoming environment

To increase access to services, agencies need to create a welcoming environment and attitude to Vietnamese people. There are a number of ways to do this including:

- Displaying signs in reception areas welcoming people in their own language,
- Providing instructions displayed on the walls in other languages on the procedure for accessing services,
- Displaying posters in reception areas and interview rooms that include people from different ethnic backgrounds,
- Educating staff including reception staff on how to speak to people who are not proficient in English such as speaking clearly and slowly, not shouting at people, smiling and making them feel that it is no trouble to ring an interpreter particularly when they first approach the service, and

- Educating staff including reception staff on how to ask for language spoken, name and phone number if someone calls who is not proficient in English so they can return their call through the telephone interpreting service.

As for all clients, people need to feel that they are being treated with respect as an individual. For people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, some understanding and respect for their cultural traditions will make them feel welcome. For example, being aware of when Vietnamese New Year occurs and wishing people happy New Year, greeting them in their language and showing empathy in situations where they are feeling the loss of traditions that are in conflict with Australian laws.

5.3.5 Parenting programs targeted at Vietnamese families

Individual casework and counselling is an important component of family support services where there are conflicts within families. However, parenting programs can help prevent family crisis from emerging and provide families confidence in parenting in Australia. This is particularly important for families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who come from cultures that are based on widely different values and ways of life than those in Australia.

The Vietnamese community in our research indicated a lack of understanding of child development, discipline options and fear of Police and the legal systems. Parenting programs to address these issues would increase parents' understanding of Australian culture and greatly assist them and their family in their ongoing settlement. In addition, it would provide parents the necessary knowledge to make choices on parenting practices that would build on their culture and traditions.

When developing programs, family support agencies need to work in partnership with ethnic specific workers and migrant support organisations to assist them to identify areas of interest, to promote the program to the community and to ensure the program is culturally appropriate. Perhaps more importantly, educational programs in partnership with ethnic specific workers and/or community leaders would enable family support staff to meet and work with families in a non-threatening environment as well as gain a more in-depth knowledge and appreciation of Vietnamese family life.

6 Vietnamese Cross Cultural Training Program for Family Support Services

Family support workers identified the need for understanding Vietnamese culture and traditions as well as settlement issues as an essential component for providing support to Vietnamese families. Following consultations with service providers to identify relevant topics to their work, a cross cultural training program was developed and piloted as part of the project.

The Project Officer developed a Training Manual through:

- Identifying the training needs of family support workers in the City of Whitehorse,
- A literature review of existing training material and research relevant to the identified topics, and
- Feedback from staff who attended the pilot project.

6.1 Training needs of family support workers

Following consultation with family support workers, the following topics were identified for inclusion in the program:

- The structure of Vietnamese families,
- The roles of family members,
- Gender issues and children,
- Cultural values of Vietnamese families,
- Vietnamese parents' expectations for their children in Australia,
- Settlement issues faces by Vietnamese families, and
- Aspects of Australian culture that Vietnamese families find it difficult to adopt.

In addition, to increase confidence in working with families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and to address language and cultural barriers, two additional topics were added to the program. These were:

- Working with families using professional interpreters, and
- Positive work practice in supporting Vietnamese families.

6.2 Literature review and research

Although people provided anecdotal evidence that a number of Vietnamese cross cultural training programs have been developed and facilitated across regions in metropolitan Melbourne, it was difficult for the Project Officer to obtain training manuals and published materials to develop the program. Our research indicated that a number of agencies develop training programs on a needs basis preparing their own overheads and handouts.

Nevertheless, the books, booklets, fact sheets and videos on Vietnamese settlement and family culture that were available formed the basis for the development of the training program. In addition, the Project Officer's personal experience of family life in Vietnam and Australia, her work as a teacher in Vietnam prior to migrating to Australia and her knowledge of Vietnamese folklore greatly contributed to the program.

6.3 Training Program

Following registration and a 5 minute introduction to the program, the first session covered demographic and historical information including general information about the country of Vietnam and history, and the migration history of the Vietnamese community in Australia. The second session of the program covered Vietnamese culture and the family including traditional family structures particularly the extended family, roles of family members – grandparents, parents and children, gender issues within the family, family cultural values, Vietnamese parents' expectations of children and settlement issues.

After morning tea, the next session involved aspects of Anglo Australian culture that Vietnamese parents tend to find difficult followed by working with Vietnamese families through interpreters and positive work practices.

The training program was developed as a three-hour program including morning tea and lunch. It was felt that it would be difficult to ask workers to commit themselves to more than a half-day training program given their high work demands. The program was piloted on 17th July 2002 and 21 people from family support services, Youth Services, Child Protection and other support services attended.

6.4 Feedback from participants

Participants were asked to complete a feedback sheet at the end of the program. Fifteen feedback sheets were obtained.

6.4.1 General satisfaction

People were asked to indicate their satisfaction with the topics covered in the program, the relevance of the topics to their work and their level of satisfaction with the presentation.

Respondents indicated a high level of satisfaction in all three areas. 60% felt that the topics covered in the program were “complete” and 40% felt they were “adequate”. In relation to the relevance of the topics, 67% found them “very relevant” whilst 33% found the topics “relevant”. Similarly, 87% indicated they were “very satisfied” with the presentation and 13% “satisfied”.

6.4.2 Best features of the program

Respondents provided a number of comments in relation to the best features of the program. These comments related to a number of key themes including people’s high level of satisfaction with the style of the presenter, program content and program planning related to venue, location and number of participants. Examples of comments that indicated the best features of the program included: “Thuong Thu’s obvious enthusiasm for her culture”, “the combination of Thuong Thu’s direct experience and her wonderful stories to illustrate her points” and “good mix of history, culture and personal experiences”.

Table 1 below provides an overview of the themes identified by the number of respondents. Comments that related to more than one theme were included under each theme.

Table 1 – Best features of the program

Comments	Number
Characteristics of the presenter	9
Program Content	9
Program Planning	3

6.4.3 Worst features of the program

In relation to the worst features of the program, 3 respondents found it difficult to read the overheads. This may be accounted for by the amount of information that was placed on the overheads which meant that some needed larger print size for people to read well. The overheads were used to provide handouts for people to take back with them to their workplace. It should be noted that one respondent felt that the training program was not long enough.

6.4.4 Improving the program

A number of diverse comments were received when respondents were asked to write ways that the program could be improved. These included:

- Setting made it difficult to see other participants,
- Perhaps a guest speaker from the community to describe their experience of migration and contact with services in Australia,
- We now need to develop better strategies to improve access but we need more work on the “how”. Will this be a separate session?
- The session should be longer.
- Some ways to engage initially in the process of beginning work.
- Full day with specific scenarios enacted through participant interaction.
- Interpreter representative to inform users of better interpreting techniques and problems they have with service providers and clients.
- Possibly include additional training with the focus on intervention strategies or ways to assist people to decide upon what bits of Aussie and Vietnamese culture to adopt.

Five respondents felt that further training was required which focused more specifically on engaging and working with Vietnamese families in a culturally appropriate way. The service model developed as part of this project would support this process by providing details on how to implement a service model to engage Vietnamese families. However, the responses indicate that professional development is also required to explore family support paradigms that respect cultural diversity.

Lastly, respondents were given the opportunity to offer general comments on the program. Many respondents used this section of the feedback sheet to offer their thanks for the program. One respondent also stated “I was interested in the commonality of issues. Adolescents, respect etc – we all share the same concerns”. Another, “All in all very informative. Gives me a framework and lots to think about. I feel a little more confident and less ‘ignorant’ about what are important cultural/cross cultural issues for Vietnamese families. Thank you.”

7 Collaborative Work Practices between Family Support Services and Ethnic Specific Workers

On 29th May 2002, a consultation was held with ethnic specific workers to identify issues affecting their work with families in crisis and particularly to identify appropriate support and collaborative work practices with family support services that would provide a more effective service outcome for families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Although the project targeted Vietnamese families, it was felt that ethnic specific workers would experience similar issues when working with families in crisis, particularly ethnic specific agencies in the Eastern Region who frequently work alone or share a part time position with another worker. Eight ethnic specific workers attended the meeting as well as Ruth Barr from ROK, Judy McDougall from the MIC and the MIC Project Officer Thuong Thu Nguyen. Of those eight who attended, five worked in agencies with only one full-time funded position for the type of work they provided, one shared their position with another worker who could not attend the meeting, four targeted specific ethnic communities and two targeted all culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the region.

7.1 Issues affecting ethnic specific agencies

The issues identified by ethnic specific workers that affected the support they provided to families in crisis related to:

- The nature of work of ethnic specific agencies,
- The need for support when working with families in crisis,
- Collaboration between ethnic specific services and family support services.

7.1.1 The nature of work of ethnic specific agencies

A major issue that emerged for ethnic specific workers involved the structure of their agencies and the nature of their work. Many workers are funded as generalist workers to support their community. In some instances, the agency is statewide. Clients can contact the service for advice and assistance on a wide range of issues including health, aged care, financial assistance, housing support, assistance to complete forms, migration advice and family problems. In addition, service providers can contact ethnic specific workers for advice on cultural issues, language and community support opportunities. In relation to mainstream agencies, the group identified that many service providers have a limited understanding of what ethnic specific workers “do”.

Furthermore, in addition to providing case management services and community development opportunities, many workers complete office administration duties

including supporting committees of management, agency accountability and reporting requirements, maintaining budget systems and making applications to obtain funding for their own positions.

Given the range of issues that they might address within their community, it is difficult for ethnic specific workers to develop a high level of expertise in all service areas. As a result, workers tend to provide practical solutions to issues. In addition, it was identified in the consultation that workers frequently target service areas to meet identified community need. For example, if the community indicates to the agency that elderly people are experiencing isolation, the worker targets aged care to address the community's identified needs and priorities.

7.1.2 Support in working with families in crisis

In many situations, practical solutions for clients are an appropriate response. However, for families in crisis with multiple issues, ethnic specific workers expressed concern that they were unable to meet the emotional and psychological needs of clients particularly the emotional needs of all family members. For example, if a family is experiencing marital conflict or domestic violence, both the partners may seek support from the agency. In these circumstances, it is difficult for workers to provide the support requested by one family member if it is against the wishes of another family member.

Ethnic specific workers frequently do not have an internal support structure that provides debriefing, clinical supervision and work validation. This process is particularly important when working with families with complex issues. In response to this, many workers create their own opportunities for support through informal networks and peer support with workers from other agencies. However, this is ad hoc and often results in delays for clients, as workers are not sure what they should do to support them.

7.1.3 Collaborative work practices between ethnic specific agencies and family support services

During the consultation, workers identified the need for the establishment of a formal network of ethnic specific workers facilitated by the MIC. This network would meet regularly to provide opportunities for debriefing, casework presentations and professional development. In addition, secondary consultation with local family support agencies on a needs basis was also identified as a valuable process for providing quality services to families in crisis.

In relation to appropriate referral to family support services, a number of issues were identified including:

- Limited understanding of family support agencies of culture and settlement issues,
- Clients having a limited understanding of family support services, how they can help them and the process for receiving assistance,

- Clients believing that ethnic specific workers have a duty to meet their needs and where necessary, a duty to go with them to other agencies,
- A lack of flexibility in family support services due to funding requirements imposed by funding bodies that may make it difficult for the agency to provide a culturally appropriate service, and
- The reluctance of ethnic specific workers to refer clients to agencies if they do not know whether the agency has an understanding of the culture and will provide a culturally appropriate service. Some workers spoke of negative experiences when referring clients to family support services e.g. clients being referred to child protection by the agency.

These issues primarily relate to the lack of information by clients about family support services as well as the lack of formal networks and collaborative work practices between ethnic specific workers and family support services. As mentioned earlier in this report, ethnic specific workers are often unable to provide intensive support to families in crisis. The support that could be obtained from collaboration between family support services and ethnic support services would be beneficial for both clients and agencies. Ethnic specific workers can provide expert advice on culture and settlement issues whilst family support workers can provide a culturally appropriate service response to families in crisis.

It was identified that ethnic specific workers need to clearly explain their role to clients as well as the role of family support services. They should encourage clients to understand the benefits of seeking support from family support services particularly in crisis situations. Workers identified that once they have established trust their clients are reluctant to go to another worker. Language barriers can also influence the client's decision to agree to go to another agency for support. To ensure families receive appropriate support it is therefore essential, that ethnic specific workers clearly explain their role to clients if they are unable to meet their needs.

In addition, as mentioned earlier in this report, educational parenting programs in partnership with ethnic specific workers and family support services would enable families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to discuss and address parenting issues whilst enabling ethnic specific workers to show support towards family support services. Furthermore, family support workers would be able to meet and better understand family culture and parenting practices in a non-threatening environment.

8 Future Directions and Implementation of the Service Model

This project has identified a number of practical short, medium and long term strategies that can be implemented by family support services, the MIC and ethnic specific agencies to provide a quality service to families in crisis from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The implementation of these strategies by family support services will be strongly encouraged by the MIC and monitored by the MIC's Youth and Family Support Services Working Group throughout 2003.

Short term strategies include:

- Family support agencies to create a welcoming environment in their agencies through displaying posters that indicate cultural diversity and creating signs of welcome in languages other than English.
- Family support agencies to establish partnerships with the MIC, ethnic specific agencies and ethnic community leaders to deliver parenting education programs on child development, discipline and family law including child protection.
- The MIC to plan and facilitate a Vietnamese Family Day on the 5th October 2002 at the Burgess Family Centre to feedback to the community the project outcomes and to provide opportunities for service promotion by local family support agencies.
- The MIC to develop a Vietnamese translation of general information about family support services including contact details for agencies in the region to distribute at the Vietnamese Family Day.
- Family support agencies and ethnic specific agencies in Whitehorse to attend the Vietnamese Family Day to promote their services.
- Ethnic specific agencies to advise clients of their role and the services available through family support agencies for families in crisis.
- Family support agencies to develop guidelines for clients on the process for accessing services i.e. what to expect when you approach the agency to make an appointment including the questions that will be asked and by whom, the expected waiting time etc.
- The MIC to develop a follow up training session that enables participants to practice using interpreters and engaging and working with families in a culturally appropriate way.

Medium term strategies include:

- Family support agencies and ethnic specific agencies to establish protocols that enable workers to contact their local agency for secondary consultations as required.
- The MIC to establish an ethnic specific network that meets regularly to provide opportunities for professional development, casework presentations and debriefing.
- Family support agencies to develop a bilingual recruitment policy based on demographic data of families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds residing in the agency's catchment area.
- The Department of Human Services Family and Community Support Program to allocate funding to the interpreting credit line for DHS funded and approved family support agencies.
- Family support agencies to promote their services on SBS radio and ethnic media on a regular basis including the confidentiality of the service provision.

Longer term strategies include:

- Ethnic specific agencies and the MIC to establish partnerships with local family support services to develop protocols for appropriate referral of families in crisis.
- Family support agencies to recruit bilingual workers as per the recruitment policy.
- The MIC to provide cross cultural training for family support workers including reception staff on cultures that reflect the diversity of families in the region.
- Family support agencies to obtain funding for translating information into languages that reflect the demographic data for families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in their catchment area.

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