



McAuley Community
Services for Women
a ministry of the Sisters of Mercy

Children's Program

Jessica Little and Kirsty Manning,
Mercy Care Program



McAuley Community Services for Women Overview

- We provide accommodation for the purpose of safety and recovery through:
 - Family Violence Crisis (24/7, women and children)
 - Transitional, supported housing (women)
- Women's Employment Program

Sisters of Mercy Melbourne Congregation

MCSW Board of Directors

MCSW
Chief Executive Officer

Service Delivery

Central
Administration

Regina Coeli
Accommodation
and Support

Mercy Care
Family Violence Crisis
Accommodation
• **Children's Program**
• **Outreach Program**

• Communications &
Fundraising
• Policy & Advocacy

• Finance
• Payroll

• Service
Development
• Human Resources

McAuley Works Women's
Employment Program

McAuley Community Services for Women

- **Mercy Care Program**
 - Family Violence
 - 24/7 Crisis Accommodation
 - Women and their children
 - Children's Program
 - Outreach Program



Mercy Care

- In 2010 accommodated
 - **319 women**
 - **357 accompanying children**
- Children ages:
 - 0 – 2 years = 33%
 - 3 – 5 years = 25%
 - 6 – 8 years = 17%
 - 9 – 11 years = 13%
 - 12 – 18 years = 12%

Mercy Care

- 36.9 families identified 'Australian' background
- 63.4% identified CALD background
- Average stay = 4 nights (maximum 6*)
- Coordinator plus 2 fulltime and 4 part time staff.
- Staffed 24/7



Children's Program

- **In House**
 - Specialist Children's Worker - fulltime
 - Weekend Children's Worker
 - Playroom
 - Books, toys, art materials, music, games
 - Therapeutic aids
 - Non-directional play therapy (child led)
 - Stand alone group sessions







Children's Program

- Mercy Care Program acquired funds from FaCHSIA to run 'Mercy Kids' Project

Two components:

- Partnership with RCH to enhance the services awareness and response to children experiencing FV (stand alone group sessions, secondary consults, focus on mother/child interaction)
- Development of 80 'Prac Packs' to provide resources for young people experiencing FV

Children's Program

- The “**Watch, Wait and Wonder**” Approach:

“...shifts the focus to the infant, requiring the parent to follow the infant’s spontaneous and undirected activity in much the same way as a psychotherapist observes and follows the lead of an adult patient.” (p. 431)

Nancy J. Cohen, Mirek Lojkasek, and Elizabeth Muir (2006)

“Watch, Wait and Wonder: An Infant-Led Approach to Infant-Parent Psychotherapy”, *Signal, Newsletter of the World Association for Infant Mental Health*, Vol. 14, No.2

Children's Program

- The **“Watch, Wait and Wonder”** Approach:

“The therapist does not instruct, give advice, or interpret the infant’s activity or play but provides a safe, supportive environment (i.e. a sensitive and responsive environment), so that the mother can express her own observations, thoughts, feelings and interpretations of her infant’s activity and their relationship.” (p.434)

Nancy J. Cohen, Mirek Lojkasek, and Elizabeth Muir (2006)

“Watch, Wait and Wonder: An Infant-Led Approach to Infant-Parent Psychotherapy”, *Signal, Newsletter of the World Association for Infant Mental Health*, Vol. 14, No.2



Children's Program

- **Child recognised as client in their own right**
 - Own intake forms
 - Own case management
 - Own safety plans
- **Advocacy – Giving Children Voices**
 - Encouraging awareness of child's experience of family violence with mothers and with other services.

Children's Program

- **Rights of the Child**

- Identifying and respecting their choices and right to safety.

- **Child Protection**

- Duty of Care to act on concerns for child safety.



Children's Program

- **Leaving Mercy Care**

- 53.3% go to high-security refuge
- 12.7% go home (back to family violence?)
- Or “friends/family”, housing services, motels, etc.

- **Safety Planning**

- For women
- For children



Children's Program

- **Buddy Bags – Alannah and Madeline Foundation**
 - 0 – 18 years, male/female: book, teddy bear, toiletries, pillowcase, pencils, photo frame.
- **Prac Packs – Mercy Care**
 - 11 – 17 years, male/female: journal, safety plan, services contact information, phone card, met ticket, Coles voucher, toiletries, teddy bear.





SAFETY PLAN

If you're a family member and an appropriate carer is in:

- 1. Call 000
- 2. You will let them know 'Police, Fire or Ambulance'
- 3. Give your name to Police
- 4. Tell them 'My name is _____'
- 5. Tell _____ where you are. Give the Police. Dad is looking Mum. My address is _____

6. DON'T HANG UP unless if you need to leave the phone

Think to make yourself feel safe

1. Someone I feel safe talking to is _____

or eg teacher, relative, friend, neighbour

Their telephone number is _____

2. Things I can tell this person are:
- I am feeling scared and unsafe
 - I am worried I am going to get hurt
 - I am worried Dad or Mum will get hurt or hurt me
 - There is shouting, screaming and swearing in the house from Mum and Dad and I am worried I am not safe

Children's Program

Outreach Program

- Children's and Families Outreach Worker
 - Transitional housing; new homes; 'Safe At Home'
 - Support with housing, legal and financial needs, education, mother/child relationship, health.
 - Emotional support.
 - Contact at home or nearby with whole family.
 - Recreation.
 - Links to other services.



Mercy Care – Children’s Program

- Handout:

Kirsty Manning and Jessica Little (2011)
“Making the Most of Every Encounter”,
*Parity: Homelessness and Children Special
Edition, Vol.24 Issue 2.*

Contact Us

- Kirsty Manning

kmanning@mcauleycsw.org.au

- Jessica Little

jlittle@mcauleycsw.org.au

