

## **Sharing our Experiences of Partnering with Families of Young People in Residential Care**

Dr. Kerry Proctor, Fiona McIlwaine, Kerry O’Sullivan and Lynda Manley are four experienced family therapists working in a Clinical Services Team supporting staff and young people in residential care, foster care, kinship care and in the family and community services programs of a large Australian non-government agency, who will facilitate this interactive presentation. They will share their practice wisdoms and reflect on their experiences of implementing family inclusive practices with children and adolescents living in the organisation’s residential care homes. The primary focus of the authors’ collective presentation is the exploration of constraints or roadblocks to effective implementation of family partnering. They will summarise the substance and conclusions of their recently published article in the online international Journal of Residential Treatment for Children & Youth (August, 2020) and will draw on relevant literature in the out-of-home care (OOHC) sector and the substantial research and practice experience which validates the importance and benefits of partnering, wherever possible, with families and kin. The underlying principle of this presentation is that it is a contravention of the rights of the child and Best Interest Practice Principles, when parents and family/kin of a child in care are not included in decision-making and in other aspects of their care. Including the voices of children and parents also guides the work of the authors who will outline some key theoretical trauma informed frameworks, outline some practice initiatives that have assisted them to challenge some of the constraints to family inclusive practice and look at practice implications for capacity building of organisations to effectively partner with families of young people in OOHC in international settings. Some case studies are presented to highlight the challenges and opportunities in this work, along with some examples of innovative and valuable initiatives in their own organisation. Through their shared stories they will explore their own experiences of working to navigate these constraints with strategies that have been implemented at all levels in OOHC, but also involve participants in sharing their own examples of family partnering in their respective organisations. The authors will advocate for the need for further research and evaluation of family inclusive practices in residential care settings, ensuring that families are equal partners in healing the ruptures caused by trauma and removal from family care, and assist with meeting the core attachment and relational needs of children and young people in care.

## Presenters:

**Dr. Kerry Proctor** - [kerry.proctor@mackillop.org.au](mailto:kerry.proctor@mackillop.org.au)



Dr. Proctor is a Psychologist and Family Therapist, currently working as a Principal Practitioner at MacKillop Family Services in the Western Region of Melbourne, Australia with a focus on enhancing family sensitive practice in both home-based care and family and community services programs. She was previously a Manager of the Indigenous Program and the Bouverie Family Therapy Centre (LTU) and also Manager, Research Program & Academic Supervisor of PHD and Masters students, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.

Kerry has extensive experience in working with individual, couples and families dealing with a wide range of difficulties. She has worked for many years with brain injury and trauma; gender diversity in families; family violence and recovery; couples and family therapy; families, children and carers involved in child protection; sexual abuse and recovery; church based abuse; transgenerational trauma and Indigenous workers and families in community. Kerry has supervised emerging psychologists and family therapists to registration, supervised within organisations and in private practice and consulted to organisations around clinical and workplace management issues.



**Fiona McIlwaine** - [fiona.macilwaine@mackillop.org.au](mailto:fiona.macilwaine@mackillop.org.au)

is a Psychologist and Family Therapist, currently working as a Principal Practitioner at MacKillop Family Services in the Northern Metro Region of Melbourne with a focus on enhancing family sensitive practice in both the residential and home based care programs. She also works in Private Practice seeing individuals, couples and families.

Fiona has worked in the areas of community health, intensive family-based services, sexual assault and child and adolescent psychiatry. She has a strong interest in working across cultures and has experience working in The Indigenous Program at the Bouverie Centre for a number of years where as part of the Clinical Program she worked with families with complex issues. She has also provided supervision to family therapy trainees and in other workplaces and has facilitated supervision training across sectors.



**Kerry O'Sullivan** - [Kerry.o'sullivan@mackillop.org.au](mailto:Kerry.o'sullivan@mackillop.org.au)

is a social worker and family therapist with over thirty years' experience in the community and medical sector. She was a senior clinician at The Royal Children's Hospital specialist sexual abuse clinic providing counselling and forensic interviewing for children and young people. She also worked as a teacher and family therapist for 8 years at the Bouverie Family Therapy Centre, La Trobe University. Over her extensive career in

family therapy she has developed and delivered training related to trauma counselling in her role at the Centre Against Sexual Assault at the Women's Hospital and co-written several published papers in this field and presented a paper on systemic approaches to childhood trauma at the Australian Family Therapy Conference in 2017. She is currently the Director of Clinical Services at MacKillop Family Services, overseeing Clinical Services and governance of therapeutic practice across programs.



**Lynda Manley - [lynda.manley@mackillop.org.au](mailto:lynda.manley@mackillop.org.au)**

Lynda is currently a Principal Practitioner in the Clinical Services area at Mackillop Family Services. She is a social worker and family therapist with twenty-seven years of experience in a range of practice areas. She has worked in clinical and leadership roles in child and family services, clinical sexual assault services and in private practice. She was a social worker and social work team leader at the Gatehouse Centre for the Assessment and Treatment of Child Abuse at the Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne for thirteen years. She has also worked at the Centre for Sexual Assault (CASA House) Melbourne as both a senior social worker and manager. Lynda has also worked in a range of roles, including team leadership, therapeutic specialist and project coordinator positions, across a number of community organisations, including an Aboriginal service. She has primarily worked with children, young people, adults and families who have experienced trauma, as well as working extensively in the out of home care sector. Lynda has been a Regulation 7 Family Consultant for the Family Court of Australia and a private contractor for the Department of Human Services' Intercountry Adoption services, as well as child protection. Lynda's work has included a significant training and education, supervision and consultancy component.

Lynda Manley, Ruth Barr and Patricia McNamara (2014). Strengthening Trauma-informed Therapeutic Practice Approaches in Out-of-home Care. *Children Australia*, 39, pp 216-220 doi:10.1017/cha.2014.33