

# ACCREDITED TRAINING FOR CARERS

Foster Care Support

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# WHO ARE WE AND WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?

- Foster Care Support founded in 2004, provides monthly meeting for carers, offering peer support and training to both kinship and mainstream carers.
- In 2008 FCS began to accredited training
- During this presentation we will provide an overview of the training provided, how it happened, what the challenges were, how it was funded and how it impacted the carers and their children.

# IDEOLOGY OF PROVIDING TRAINING

- Our foundational belief is that a well equipped and supported carer provides better long term outcomes for vulnerable children in care.
- The ultimate aim of providing accredited training was to prevent “placement drift” and equip carers to better cope with the more challenging situations they may face.

# WHAT ARE THE STATES DOING?

- What does each state do in terms of training carers?

# CASE STUDIES

- What is Foster Care Support doing and hoping to achieve?

## 2008 *MENTORING IN THE COMMUNITY*

- The aim of this program is a self perpetuating cycle of experienced carers mentoring inexperienced carers.
- Helen La Nauze funding, provided through the Border Trust auspiced by Youth Emergency Services.
- Training provided through the NSW TAFE Outreach Program
- Feedback we get from carers all the time indicates they want the training they do to be accredited and recognised such as this course.
- The course was 13 weeks. A once a week commitment from carers - many of whom have not studied for more than 30 years. The course itself has been thought provoking and the feedback from the carers indicates they got a lot out of it personally, in terms of how it made them consider how they communicate and are perceived by others.

## 2008 *MENTORING IN THE COMMUNITY*

- Feedback from participants
- **What was the most useful about the training?**
- Informative – had fun
- Very informative and I learned a lot about myself because of the course
- The information was presented in a clear way that was easy to disseminate
- Understanding other people's views
- I found everything very useful
- Meeting with other carers
- Learning more to understand people's needs

## 2009 *MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID*

- In May 2009, 18 carers completed the Mental Health First Aid Certificate. This course is designed to equip people to deal with a person suffering from a mental health crisis, until appropriate professional assistance can be sought.
- MHFA was run over four consecutive weeks, for a 3 hour session.
- This short course was so successful that we will be running it again, and have just received funding from the Foundation of Rural and Regional Renewal to do so.

# 2009 *MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID*

- Feedback from the carers, answering the question, “What was the most useful aspect of this course?”
- *Everything*
- *How to approach and help a person with mental illness*
- *Knowledge, encouragement, validation*
- *Helpful with foster care, work, generally meeting and dealing with people in life*

# TAFE NSW OUTREACH PROGRAM

- TAFE NSW Outreach is an initiative in the Australian tertiary education sector to offer educational opportunities to people who would not otherwise gain access to appropriate courses. Outreach negotiates courses with potential students (hours, attendance, subjects and content, etc).
- All Outreach courses are free, as they target disadvantaged groups in the Australian community. They can be held at colleges or off campus in community locations to cater for isolated communities, childcare needs, lack of transport, and other barriers.

# TAFE OUTREACH PROGRAM

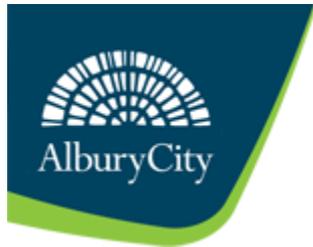
## OUTREACH POLICY - TAFE NSW

- **The purpose of the Outreach Program is to promote educational equity by broadening the educational opportunities for groups of adults who are under-represented in education.**
- 1.Objectives - Policy statement **1.1 The TAFE NSW Outreach Program** is designed to provide an access point by which adults can re-enter education. The Outreach Program aims to:
  - **1.1.1** develop vocational skills that can lead to paid employment
  - **1.1.2** develop courses of study that will provide alternative pathways through the tertiary education system
  - **1.1.3** offer a range of programs, including bridging, remedial, and introductory courses, to assist individuals to gain or enhance the skills necessary to find work
  - **1.1.4** promote the most beneficial and educationally efficient relationship between TAFE Institutes and other educational institutions throughout the State.
- **1.2** The TAFE Thesaurus defines **Outreach Courses** as "courses designed for people who, for various reasons, find participation in further education difficult.
- **1.3 Barriers to participation** 1.3.1 Barriers to participation in education may include educational and economic disadvantage, lack of confidence, age, language and cultural factors, family commitments, a disability, and geographical or social isolation.
- **1.4 Target Groups** 1.4.1 Individuals within groups such as migrants, Aboriginal people, women, sole parents, older people, mature age unemployed, youth at risk, people with a disability and the geographically isolated often have to deal with a combination of barriers, and are examples of particular target groups for Outreach.

# *ART THERAPY PROJECT FOR FOSTER CARERS*

- **Six Week Course in Accessing Your Creative Resources for Healthy Living**
- Art Therapy is an enriching, gentle way to explore our connection with our mind, body, emotions and spirit. It is a tool to enhance and improve our self awareness and authenticity. In Art Therapy we look at the whole person within their environment. We use creative interventions from modern psychology and more traditional cultures to look at ways of dealing with the spectrum of human emotions and potential. We aim to help people find new perspectives on the problems encountered in our daily lives. It is also an opportunity to focus on and expand on what is life enhancing. You don't have to be good at art, or have done any art at all. Art Therapy is not about what is produced it is more about the process.
- The objective of a six week course in Art Therapy is to give Foster Carers an introduction in ways to increase their self awareness, develop their community and to learn ways to help others work with their physical, emotional and mental well being. By working with the well being of carers we aim to equip them with tools to connect and communicate more effectively with their children.

# ART THERAPY PROJECT FOR FOSTER CARERS



- *Funded by carers own fundraising efforts, grant money from AlburyCity and Murray Arts. Many in kind contributions from community groups.*



## *ART THERAPY PROJECT FOR FOSTER CARERS*

Feedback from the carers:

- *All of it was excellent. I feel my inner self enriched.*
- *Exploring creativity in a safe encouraging environment. Some art skills in communicating with our little person and each other.*
- *Best thing was the togetherness created. Loads and loads out of this course.*
- *Awakened my creative mind to working with kids.*

# 2010 TUNING INTO KIDS

- This year we undertook the *Tuning Into Kids* course, which was again self funded by the carers, and the fundraising efforts of the support group. CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service) offered to run this course for our group, which was held over 6 sessions.
- Tuning in to Kids is a parenting program that helps children learn to understand and regulate their emotions. It taught carers:
  - awareness and regulation of their own emotions
  - awareness of their children's emotions
  - to use children's emotional experiences as an opportunity for closeness and teaching
  - skills in assisting children to verbally label and manage their emotions
  - skills in assisting children in problem solving to guide children's behaviour with
  - appropriate limits

## 2010 TUNING INTO KIDS

- *Caregivers who received the Tuning in to Kids program improved in their ability to respond to children's emotions in supportive and teaching ways. They were also much less likely to be dismissive or critical when their children were emotional.*
- *Children of caregivers participating in the program experienced significant reductions in behaviour problems, especially in those families where the child was having behaviour problems before the program began.*
- *Results also suggest that caregivers who learn to Emotion Coach can help their children cope better with anxiety.*

## WHERE TO FROM HERE?

- Nationally accredited course
- Ongoing accredited training for carers
- Standardization of training across Australia, equitable access to ongoing training for carers