

The Aboriginal Healing Project (AHP) is a two-year project, utilising combined state and Australian Government funds, providing healing services to Indigenous individuals and families affected by family and domestic violence, and sexual violence, with the goals of increasing safety and reducing harm within families. The project started in January 2006 and current funding is due to expire in January 2009.

The goals of this project include:

- increased sense of group cohesion, value and worth;
- identifying and agreeing collective actions that will heal the effects of past suffering and harm;
- increased sense of safety in family and community groups;
- reduction in the incidence and experience of violence; and
- increased safety of children and women, and ultimately of all group members.

The project combines community awareness and direct service delivery for Indigenous individuals, families and communities in rural, regional and urban areas. The project engages with a range of “target groups”, including women victim/survivors of adult sexual assault, adult survivors of child sexual abuse, young people, and children. Indigenous communities and school communities are also involved.

The project works to support and complement state and territory government initiatives addressing Indigenous family violence, by building on the Australian Government’s commitment to tackling family violence in Indigenous communities. The emphasis is on developing local solutions to issues that contribute to violence, such as alcohol and drug use, and address causal factors to family violence, particularly socio-economic and participatory issues, to effect sustainable change.

The project idea came from literature about healing. The idea is that if you commence healing in an Indigenous community, it reduces the level of violence. Thus, healing refers to the impacts of historical and cumulative trauma, and broader issues of poverty, housing and health, as well as the specific problems of sexual violence and family violence.

The AHP engages in community consultation to develop the healing activities and the mapping of services during their planning stages. This helps to prevent the duplication of services, as well as making sure that the project is responsive to the needs of local communities. Through referrals to other agencies, the AHP project officers are able to create partnerships and promote AHP in their local area. This encourages the relationship and/or shared arrangements for servicing of clients.

The process of evaluating the project is currently underway. Templates have been created for monitoring and planning of activities; these also ensure that key performance indicators are being met for the project. This program could be replicated for any particular group of people or community, by consulting with the target group and planning the activities (as governed by the group) to heal the effects of trauma.

The Aboriginal Healing Project is funded through the Family Violence Partnership Programme (FVPP), which is a Family and Community Services Indigenous Affairs (FACSIA) initiative.

More detail, including contact information, is online at the ACSSA Promising Practice Database: www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/ppdb/programs.html, under “Aboriginal Healing Project”.

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