

# The Evaluators' National Newsletter

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June 2008

Welcome to the June 08 edition of *The Evaluators' National Newsletter*. This newsletter is the final in a series providing information about the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (SFCS) National Evaluation. This newsletter and the National Evaluation are funded under the Australian Government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2004 - 2008.

## **NATIONAL EVALUATORS' NEWS**

The National Evaluation project is drawing to a close. Since its inception in 2004 an enormous amount of work has gone into evaluating the many facets of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy. The National Evaluators would like to take this opportunity to thank SFCS project staff, service providers, Facilitating Partners and Local Evaluators for your invaluable contribution to this project. Your energy and commitment to families and the communities in which they live is certainly a key ingredient in any success measured through the National Evaluation.

This newsletter provides a summary of the main activities undertaken by the National Evaluators over the past six months. Past editions of this newsletter are available on the CAFCA website at: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/evaluation/pubs/newsletter.html>.

### **Themed Studies**

By June 30 the National Evaluators are expecting to complete three in-depth 'Themed Studies', exploring particular areas relevant to all strategies of the SFCS.

*Study 1 is about service provision and co-ordination for Indigenous children and families.*

The Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at the University of New South Wales is conducting this study on how the SFCS has impacted on service provision and co-ordination in areas with high proportions of Indigenous children and families and, in turn, on outcomes for Indigenous families and children. The research includes a literature review about the coordination and provision of early childhood services in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and offers findings from case studies, telephone interviews and site visits to Indigenous communities.

*Study 2 is about engaging children and families who are usually hard to reach.*

SPRC is also undertaking a study on how SFCS-funded services have engaged (and sought to engage) children and families with high indicators of disadvantage who are not accessing services. It has identified the extent to which SFCS services have sought to adapt their services to meet the needs of these children and families, and the factors service providers believe may inhibit and facilitate client engagement. The research contributes to the evidence base on engagement strategies and helps identify innovative approaches for future interventions.

*Study 3 is about engaging fathers in child and family services.*

The Australian Institute of Family Studies is expecting to complete a study on father engagement that explores father participation in SFCS services and projects aimed at supporting families with children. The research provides insight into father's experiences with different types of services as well as the experience of particular target groups, including young fathers, fathers from a cultural and linguistically diverse background (CALD), refugee fathers and fathers in remote and rural communities. The study includes perspectives from both service users and providers, and contributes to the knowledge of what works to engage fathers in child and family services, the barriers to access, fathers' perceptions of services, and what they feel they gain from participation.

### **Service Coordination Study**

The second round of service coordination surveys have been distributed to service providers located in CfC sites identified in the service mapping. Services were asked about how they coordinate and cooperate with other local services. A total of 302 completed surveys were returned. A second round of 124 interviews was also conducted with Facilitating Partner organisations, CfC committee members, service providers and government representatives in the ten *Stronger Families in Australia* (SFIA) sites. Thank you to all who contributed to this important facet of the National Evaluation.

### **Stronger Families in Australia**

SFIA is the core component of the outcome evaluation for Communities for Children sites and is referred to as the 'Family Study' in the SFCS Evaluation Framework. Fieldwork for wave 3 began in February 2008 and 1,845 interviews have been completed, which brings the overall response rate to an impressive 91%. A report of the SFIA findings will be presented to the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) in July 2008.

The information website for SFIA participants is available at <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/sfia>.

### **Promising Practice Profiles (PPP)**

The first *Promising Practice Profiles* have been published on the CAFCA website at <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/ppp/ppprofiles.html>.

The call for proposals in the third and final round of *PPP* commenced February 4 and closed March 14. A series of teleconferences were held to support participating projects and a large number of proposals were received. These have been subjected to a process of peer review. Over the three proposal rounds, more than 50 programs and services were accepted as promising practices.

*Promising Practice Profiles* are available at: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/ppp/ppprofiles.html>.

### **Progress report analysis**

FaHCSIA has provided the SPRC with progress reports from all CfC and LA projects. These reports cover the range of activities and projects undertaken by each Facilitating Partner, along with perceived outcomes and success factors. The analysis of this data is underway and a report will be provided as part of the National Evaluation.

### **Outcome Indicator Framework**

SPRC is finalising the collection of available secondary administrative data to determine (where possible) the extent of community changes in the wellbeing of children, families and communities over the life of the strategy. In most cases, these data sources will require further tracking in the future.

## **RESOURCES & PUBLICATIONS**

- National Evaluation website: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/evaluation/sfcsevaluation.html>
- SFCS website: <http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/sfsc-sfcs.htm>
- Baseline Report on Communities for Children Process Evaluation: <http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/reports/index.htm>

Resources available at the CAFCA website include:

- The National Evaluation Framework: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/evaluation/pubs/framework.pdf>
- Stronger Families in Australia (SFIA) participant site: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/sfia>
- Promising Practice Profiles (PPP): <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/ppp/ppprofiles.html>
- Resources for PPP: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/ppp/pppresources.html>
- SFCS Local Evaluators Extranet: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/lee/lee.html>
- Questionnaires (evaluation tools): <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/evaluation/questionnaires.html>
- National Evaluation Questions and Answers: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/evaluation/faqs.html>
- NGO Forum presentations: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/evaluation/networkresources.html>



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