

SETS Community of Practice

Communique: Health and Housing Service Linkages Subgroup Meeting

Videoconference – 8 November 2021

On 8 November, SETSCoP held its first meeting of the new Health and Housing Service Linkages subgroup.

Presentation from STARTTS (NSW)

Jasmina Bajraktarevic, Community Services Coordinator at STARTTS, presented to subgroup members about the partnership between STARTTS and NSW Health and their Community Living Supports for Refugees program. Key points included:

- Based in South-West Sydney there is a multicultural working group focused on COVID-19. STARTTS, settlement providers, local Councils and community leaders are all involved.
- Mental Health Community Living Supports for Refugees (MH-CLSR) is a community based program located in seven Local Health Districts that provides mental health support for refugees and asylum seekers. No formal mental health diagnosis is required and program participants can be of any age.
- STARTTS delivers training for settlement, health and LGBTIQ+ service providers about supporting LGBTIQ+ refugees and asylum seekers. STARTTS has also developed and implemented training for interpreters and runs two social support groups for LGBTIQ+ refugees and asylum seekers. All groups and training are co-designed and co-facilitated by people with lived experience.
- STARTTS delivers Mental Health Literacy and Suicide Prevention projects, projects focusing on refugee young people and the Keeping in Contact Project focusing on isolated seniors of refugee backgrounds

Strategies adopted by service providers to support the housing needs of clients

It is becoming increasingly difficult due to increase in rent and difficulty to access housing.

Attendees discussed strategies they are adopting in housing support, including:

- Working with real estate agents and investors who are willing to provide housing to clients
 - These partnerships were established following a forum organised by the settlement service provider to discuss housing issues
- Working with local community organisations and churches to identify community members who are willing to rent accommodation to clients, including rooms or granny flats
 - This can lead to other benefits such as community members volunteering to assist with driving clients to the shops and taking children to enrol in school, taking the pressure off SETS and HSP providers

Strategies adopted by service providers to support the health needs of clients

Attendees discussed various strategies to support the health needs of their clients, including:

- Mater Hospital in Brisbane has a group called the “G11” which includes representatives from a range of communities. This group consults with communities to identify issues and take that information back to share with service providers, so that services can be adjusted to make them more culturally appropriate. Work has been done to partner with them and bring a similar program to Toowoomba hospital.
- Community consultations
 - For example, asking questions such as: how does the community see health? What makes someone healthy? What areas does the community want to engage with first?
- Participation in COVID advisory committee and connecting with PHN networks and Multicultural Health Networks
- Bilingual staff
 - For example, seconding staff to NSW Health to assist with COVID clinics or bilingual counsellors to assist online during lockdown
- Health navigator model connected with settlement services
 - For example, one provider partnered with AMEP providers to deliver a course for newly arrived people on the health system and COVID-19. The provider took eight students who attended that unit and offered work for them to be employed to provide information on COVID and other topics to their community. These individuals also helped local community in their language at pop-up vaccination clinics.
- Information sessions
 - For example, one provider partnered with the Department of Health to deliver sessions about healthy eating and taught clients how to read health labels on food
- Fostering relationships with health services
 - For example, one provider organises a “meet and greet get together” with local health services several times a year. Staff get together to discuss a common theme or issue. This helps to identify emerging issues and possible solutions, as well as to build networks with health providers.

Shared resources

Information on the STARTTS CLSR program and MH-CLSR program below:

<https://www.startts.org.au/services/community-living-supports-refugees/>
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/services/adults/Pages/mental-health-community-living-supports-for-refugees.aspx>