

Suggestion for improving Child Protection in the NT.

1. Place more emphasis on skill development of parents who are experiencing difficulties before the situation with the children becomes critical. Staff working in this arena should be most experienced team members as previously family support had staff with limited salary and skills suggesting front end work was not viewed as important in the past.
2. Community Development strategies to foster more community support for families who are vulnerable in terms of child care
3. More emphasis on skilling up parents/extended family/community leaders when a child comes into care to ensure that realistic change in the family of origin happens. This intervention should be a mixture of Government programs and Non -Government programs with clear outcomes stated at the beginning of the Out of Home Care experience and funding to resource the skill maintenance once it has begun. Accepting that Relapse is part of any change process
4. Set up a Critical Response team which meets with families/ schools/hospitals and /health centre staff to set up intervention strategies and social learning matters in communities or families before Child Protection action is initiated. These Teams should recruit from a diverse range of cultures.
5. Therapeutic work with all stakeholders in the child's social orbit, schools, carers, extended family legal personnel should commence immediately a family is visible to Welfare agencies.
6. A clear process for leaving care and support to families involved in Re-unification needs to be more appropriately managed previously support work to the parents was not mandatory and seldom assessed as relevant
7. Case loading for inexperienced staff requires to be reviewed – many base level staff are asked to undertake tasks that are beyond their level of understanding.
8. The Practice Advisor role should be enhanced currently many Practice advisors are used as relief team leaders and not given the power to intervene in cases for the good of all stakeholders
9. Prior to an indigenous family being placed in care consultation with a Senior Indigenous officer be actioned to consider all the options available to the Department prior to going down the Out of Home Care pathway
10. Shift work for child protection staff be considered as many resolvable matters happen outside Government Office hours
11. The expertise of CDU personnel many of whom have had a history in Welfare and Health practices should be accessed to provide reflective practice ,mentoring support and academic reviews to Child Protection practice in the NT. One matter the University would be able to support would be developing support and academic services on how children in Out of Home Care are helped to access higher education as few children in the OOHC system attain year 12 at this time .

Regards

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