



Evidence and
Implementation
Summit 2023
9-11 October

Melbourne, Australia & Online



Behavioural and Implementation
Science Interventions
Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine



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#196 - Building the evidence of Cultural Practice Elements

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Objectives/aims

Over the last four years, the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency has worked with the Centre for Evidence and Implementation to develop Aboriginal cultural practice elements. This work was funded by the Victorian Government and the Lowitja Institute and was done as part of a broader body of work to document common practice elements. VACCA's work aimed at contributing to an Aboriginal evidence base of what works with Aboriginal families, in a context where Western evidence has been predominant in designing programs and services to support Aboriginal children and families. This presentation will show how prioritising context leads to better outcomes for Aboriginal children and families and thereby aligns with the theme: *Context counts: Translation, adaptation, and transportability of evidence across people, place, culture and system.*

Methods

Much of the evidence for what works in family preservation and reunification comes from programs that were developed and trialed overseas and do not have 'built in' considerations for their application to Aboriginal families. Further, there are unique, discrete cultural practices that are different from those currently captured in the published evidence base that are essential for effective service delivery with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. These cultural practices are well-known and deeply understood by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners, but this knowledge is not always well-documented which limits implementation potential.

In this presentation we share how VACCA undertook a co-design process to identify and describe a number of cultural practice elements. The Aboriginal led process included consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners who



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have experience working across Victoria. The elements were behaviorally described and documented in Practice Guides which provide an overview of the Element, why it is important and specific techniques or behaviors to engage in when drawing on that Element in practice with Aboriginal children and families.

Main findings

These cultural elements were disseminated for use by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and mainstream agencies providing services to Aboriginal children and families in Victoria. Informed by evidence-based implementation strategies and using the Cultural Elements practice guides and training sessions, Cultural practice coaches have been providing active implementation support to child and family service agencies. To our knowledge, this is the first time that Aboriginal, and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices have been afforded this degree of recognition and have been embedded in child and family services state-wide, marking an important milestone in providing high-quality, effective, and culturally responsive services for Aboriginal children and families.

Through this process, we have uncovered an opportunity to identify and develop, for the first time, an Aboriginal evidence base of practiced culture. The co-design methodology used to develop and capture common and cultural practice elements has allowed for the discovery of adding narrative and description to existing cultural factors that allow practitioners insight and understanding of how to work with cultural sensitivity and understanding.

To date, several hundred practitioners across Victoria have participated in training sessions on the Cultural Elements of Practice, many of whom are receiving coaching support to implement the elements in their work. Coaching on the cultural elements has been provided to approximately seventy people in nineteen sites across the state.