

Capacity building for outcome evaluations: lessons learned using participatory methods to develop a routine data collection protocol within two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander alcohol and other drug residential rehabilitation services in Queensland

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Introduction/Issues: This study aims to understand and strengthen the ways in which two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander alcohol and other drug (AOD) residential rehabilitation treatment services of Pinangba (Queensland) routinely collect and collate clinical data to build a culture of ongoing service improvement and evaluation within their services. The project has two phases. Phase 1 involves examining current client data collection at Pinangba and developing a new routine data collection tool which will be used in Phase 2 to conduct an outcome evaluation. The results of Phase 1 will be presented.

Method/Approach: This study followed a participatory evaluation method and design involving clients and staff of Cape York Family Centre and Stagpole Street Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Unit, Queensland. Four data collection methods were employed: an administrative client data analysis; client and staff interviews; staff workshops; and a pilot of the protocol with clients.

Key Findings: The following domains were considered important to collect data on: social and cultural connectedness; family; AOD use; quality of life; and program satisfaction. Interestingly, although ceasing AOD use was considered a key client goal, it was not necessarily the central focus of clients. Our findings also illustrate that there is no centralised systematic way of collecting outcome data at the two services, despite being considered essential to track client progress and to report to clients, staff and community.

Discussions and Conclusions: To ensure that routine data collection practices are embedded in AOD treatment services, it is important to work collaboratively with a service and to build their capacity to implement a culture of continual and ongoing quality improvement and evaluation.

Implications for Practice or Policy: Our findings can support other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services who would like to implement ongoing evaluation into their services, involving meaningful engagement with the affected communities.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: The study is funded by the Queensland Mental Health Commission.