

## **Working with Male Perpetrators of Family Violence: Reflections on Collusion**

### **Background**

On Thursday 5 September the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership hosted the 'Working with Male Perpetrators of Family Violence: Reflections on Collusion' training developed and facilitated by Ada Conroy, Senior Workforce Development Officer at the Northern Integrated Family Violence Services (NIFVS) at Women's Health in the North.

Ada, is an experienced men's behaviour change practitioner and developed the *Collusion* training package to respond to the overwhelming demand for mainstream training that focuses on responding to male perpetrators of family violence. Ada has worked in women's family violence services for 20 years.

The aim of the training program is to assist practitioners to effectively identify and respond to male perpetrators of family violence through learning how to avoid collusion by identifying core beliefs held by male perpetrators. It is designed for practitioners who may come across male perpetrators in the course of their work and who had already completed training that covered:

- Gendered nature of family violence
- Social context under which family violence occurs
- Impact of family violence on women and children, including intersecting barriers
- Common Risk Assessment Framework

### **Training**

22 practitioners attended the training program from Specialist Family Violence, Health, Family and Aboriginal services and the Department of Justice and Corrections.

The first half of the day focused on information gathering and sharing, led by facilitator, Ada, who encouraged ongoing engagement from participants through robust discussions, drawing on the expertise, knowledge and experiences around the room and reflecting upon participant's professional work and their own understanding of family violence. The topics covered included:

- What is family violence
- Accountability
- Evidence Based Risk Factors
- Core Beliefs
- Challenges and Opportunities
- Collusion

The second half of the day focused on participant's engagement through reflecting on the short film, *50/50: Increasing the Odds for Safety and Respect*, followed by a challenging practice session of role playing. The role play consisted of 3 participants rotating through the different roles in the Case Study provided by Ada around 'Male Perpetrator Accountability' and reflecting back to the group. Some of the participants comments included 'feelings of confrontation', 'having to hold individual hope for the client as it's a long

road ahead' and 'coming up with different approaches to counter the imbalance of power and resistance'.

The day concluded by covering:

- Safety planning and;
- Referrals

Followed by a reflective practice of summing up the day in one word. Words that were spoken included; 'thoughtful', "informed", "full", "tired", "hopeful", "excited" and "encouraged". Furthermore, participants were encouraged to continue developing their professional skills in this area by observing a Men's Behaviour Change Program in their region and to join the Collusion Community of Practice that Ada runs quarterly in Thornbury.

#### **Evaluation summary comments:**

- Trainer really engaging and knowledgeable and excellent and maintaining interest and encouraging an interactive safe space for collaboration and information sharing
- Excellent presenter
- She was fabulous – lots of experience and knowledge but also a great facilitator
- It would be better for Ada and another practitioner to do a role play for us first, so we can see how the conversation might go in live format

#### **What significant change will participants change in their work:**

- Be careful of the language used and more reflective in my practice
- Made me more aware how often this occurs and how much work I have to do in general to resist these invitations in everyday life
- Information sharing with my work colleagues
- Use appropriate question and lines of inquiry whilst maintaining a balance of safety for the victim survivor
- Allowing myself to be firmer with perpetrators
- I will speak more around collusion, I know what to look for and to bring it back to the core three beliefs
- To be careful of language used and more reflective of my practice as this is a new and unfamiliar approach for me

#### **What other family violence training would be useful:**

- Working with victim survivors
- Perpetrator safety planning
- Useful information on the aims of men's behaviour programs
- What collusion is and how to avoid/minimize it
- Legal changes
- MARAM
- Motivational interviewing