

Community breastfeeding mentoring workshops are an effective method to support breastfeeding

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Breastfeeding is promoted in Australia because it improves long term health outcomes for mothers and babies. In comparison to the general population breastfeeding rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers are lower and this increases health risks for mothers and babies.

This paper reports on the development and delivery of a two-day continuing professional development program designed and delivered to enable participants to effectively promote and support breastfeeding. The program was delivered as workshops during 2014 to registered Aboriginal health practitioners/workers and allied health professionals who work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers.

58 participants from mainstream and community controlled health services completed the workshops. The workshops were delivered at 5 ASGC RA 3 locations and 1 ASGC RA 2 location in 4 states across Australia. Culturally appropriate materials and interactive and practical learning activities were used during the workshops. Participants were progressively assessed during the workshops and received a nationally recognised statement of attainment on successful completion of all workshop assessments.

Participants worked through their own beliefs and attitudes about breastfeeding, gained basic breastfeeding knowledge and practised how to provide effective breastfeeding support.

Two stages of feedback were conducted to evaluate the CPD program. Workshop delivery evaluations were collected on each day of the workshop to track participant satisfaction and immediate response to skills and knowledge learned. This feedback consistently included comments about the value of the role play activities. The second stage of the feedback was conducted at least 1 month post workshop by telephone interview. This feedback indicates participants had been able to make changes to their practice based on their learning from the workshop to better assist mothers to breastfeed.

These workshops have proven to be successful in achieving their outcomes. Significant interest has been expressed for further workshops and a number will be delivered during 2015. Planning has commenced to conduct further research into its longer term effectiveness and to further improve the efficacy of these workshops.