Collaborative Family Work – a practical model for working with families in the human services

- Professor Chris Trotter
- Director Monash University Criminal Justice Research Consortium
Why Family Work with Offenders

- Family are one of the most important factors in young offending.
- The YLSI analysis of risk factors places it alongside prior offences, substance abuse, peer relations, education and employment, and personality type as major determinants of re-offending.
- Bonta et al (2008) found family issues to be the most commonly identified criminogenic need emerging from a sample of risk assessments of young offenders placed on probation. It was identified more often than drug use for example.
Most frequently discussed in supervision

- For both young and adult offenders, family issues were discussed in probation supervision (analysed through tapes of interviews) more than any other issue (Bonta, et al 2008).
Predicting Recidivism in Juvenile Offenders on Community Based Orders (Denning & Homel 2008)

- Analysis of case management files found that recidivism was significantly lower when POs (1) engaged with clients and (2) managed family problems
- Twice as likely to offend if family problems were not addressed
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criminogenic needs</th>
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<td>Health</td>
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<td>Anger management</td>
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<td>Offences</td>
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</table>

(Trotter 2012)
Table 7 Client responses to issues discussed in interviews

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<th>Issue</th>
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<td>Offences</td>
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Short Term family and Behavioural Treatment

- Short Term family and Behavioural Treatment 25%
- No treatment 50%
- Psych-dynamic 73%
- Client centred 47%

- Re-offence rates 6 to 18 months later
- Alexander and Parsons 1973)
Collaborative Family Work

CHRIS TROTTER

A practical guide to working with families in the human services

Chris Trotter addresses the ‘how’ of a field that is often focused on general principles and on practical detail.’

Dr Chris Beckett, University of East Anglia, UK
Why Collaborative Family Work

1. Clear structure
2. Easily learnt
3. Makes use of other models
4. It is a partnership model
5. It is being used successfully with young offenders in other places
6. It has some research support
Background to the model

- Based on earlier work by William Reid, Gerald Patterson, Epstein and Bishop and Alexander and Parsons
- Adds a pro-social dimension and more recent principles of effective practice with offenders to those models
- Consistent with what works principles (e.g. Trotter 2005, Andrews and Bonta 2005)
Collaborative Family Work - RIDGES

- Role and rules
- Identify issues
- Decide what to work on first
- Goals
- Explore the issue
- Strategies
Evaluations of Family Problem Solving

- Vic safe – volunteers from schools, police, youth workers, family support workers
- Student project – 24 students working with 12 families at Atherton Family Centre – mostly referrals from DHS
- Students in Juvenile Justice Dandenong
- Dandenong Children’s Court Project
How successful do you believe your intervention was with the family or client in terms of achieving the family or client's goals?

(8 38%)  (12 57%)  (1 5%)  
Totally Successful Very Successful Not so successful Unsuccessful
On the whole, how are you getting along now compared with when you first began treatment here.

(23/31 74%) (11/31 35%) (2/31 6%) (1/31 3%)
Much better A little better About the same Worse
Consider the one problem you most wanted the caseworker or counsellor to help you with. How is this problem now compared with how it was when you first started treatment here?

- No longer present (1/31 3%)
- A lot better (25/31 80%)
- A little better (4/31 13%)
- About the same (1/31 3%)
- Worse
prior to the counselling I was at my wits end as to how to cope with the situation my son and I found myself in regarding his offending, its effects on those around him, myself and the grief it was causing. … we were able to put in place processes that assisted us both, highlighting mutual areas of concern and broke down some of the barriers that were also hindering family communication. …. Clearly these sessions could not be a cure all but they offered tools that could and did assist…. I believe many families would also find value in this type of assistance”. 
This project is examining the effect of collaborative family work on juvenile offenders, focusing on both family relationships and recidivism.
Project

- 50 young people offered CFC in detention 2 sessions in
- 4-8 sessions in community
- Compared to 50 young people in another detention centre
- 50 percent aboriginal – higher in western region
Outcome measures

- Recidivism
- Compliance
- Family ratings of functioning
- Views about model – families and workers
- Completion of sessions
- Uptake of CFC
- IT partner
Outcomes to date

- 14 families completed
- Staff positive – feel skilled
- Family members positive
- Some amazing stories – intervention order, chess games
Juvenile Justice

- Committed to implement state wide if successful
- Some concern jj workers and counsellors doing family counselling
- Challenge – getting referrals, staff persistence/resistance, resources