

THE FOSTER PARENTS SUPPORT NETWORK

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

“FOSTER PARENTING ~ EXCELLENCE THROUGH TEAMWORK” - Mary Ann & Allan Goodearle AM

Mary Ann and Allan Goodearle have been foster and adoptive parents for 38 years. They have two grown biological children. Mary is a former Child Protection Social Worker, FC Program Coordinator and FC Trainer. Her book, “A Guide to Foster Parenting Everything But the Kids” was released last year. Mary received her Master’s Degree in Human Services and Public Administration in 1995. Mary and Allan live in Mena Arkansas, in the United States of America. Allen is a former foster child. He was placed in 14 different foster homes between the ages of 5-15, he was the driving force behind the couple becoming foster parents. Allen’s childhood experiences still affect him today. Allen and Mary tour the country together presenting workshops for foster parents and keynoting conferences.

Most foster, relative and kinship carers start out with altruistic motivations. They want to provide love and care for needy children. But, taking care of the children is only half of the job. Carers must put “survival in the system skills” on their foster parenting resumes!

They must take on the challenge of fully participating in their foster children’s case plans and meetings, while at the same time being able to recognize that each team member has a unique role to play. All the team members must have the same goal ie, “what is best for the foster child!” This prevents the confusion often caused by going down separate paths and pursuing different goals.

“CONTACT WITH BIRTH PARENTS ~ WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY” – Dr. Stephanie Taplin

Dr. Taplin is Research Fellow at the National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre at the University of NSW. She has worked as a researcher for nearly 20 years, three of which were spent at the Centre of Parenting and Research, within the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS), reviewing the research evidence on out-of-home care. Exploring the literature around contact between birth parents and children in care was a major piece of work undertaken at the Centre. Dr. Taplin has recently moved to the University of NSW where she has received a fellowship, funded by DoCS, to conduct research on parental substance misuse and child protection. As contact is very much part of most foster, relative and kinship carers lives, this keynote address will be of interest to both the carers and the professional workers.

WORKSHOP INFORMATION

ABORIGINAL ISSUES IN OOHC: Presenters – *Aboriginal Services Branch - CP & OOHC Team*

The purpose of this workshop is to highlight and advise you of the current programme areas for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in OOHC that have been implemented by DoCS.

PARENTING ON THE SAME CHANEL: Presenters – *Mary Ann and Allan Goodearle*

The objective of this workshop is to enhance the skills of foster carers thereby equipping them with strategies that will assist them to plan in advance for the challenging situations that can arise with children and young people in care. You will learn how to replace criticism of each other with complimentary parenting.

UNDERSTANDING YOURSELF AND OTHERS: Presenter – *Barbara Shelley MA*

Barbara is a Psychotherapist, holding a post graduate and Masters Degree in Counselling. Barbara works in private practice where she has had extensive experience in dealing with families in crisis, relationship and interpersonal counseling and managing addictions. She also holds workshops on parenting, communication and relationships and is a school counselor. The presentation will look at the personality factor, different learning styles and how it can impact on our relationships. The way we think and act and how we come across to other people is an important factor for interpersonal communication. Understanding ourselves assists us in understanding others and opens the door to smoother relationships. **NOTE** this is a **TWO** part session.

PERMANENCY PLANNING IN DOCS: Presenter – **Les Cormack**

How application of attachment theory to early decision making for children entering Out of Home Care is leading to permanent care arrangements for children:

The gradual introduction of permanency planning to case practice in Community Service centres in DoCS is leading to early decision making for young children entering into care based on thorough assessment of chances of restoration and exploration of permanent care options, including relative/kinship care, permanent foster care and adoption. This paper will describe the rationale for permanency planning and describe how the process is applied in the DoCS context.

UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTS OF CHILD ABUSE: Presenter – **Barbara Biggs**

Barbara Biggs grandmother sold her to a paedophile barrister when she was 14 years of age. But it took her 25 years to realize the impact of her abuse and report it to the police. Barbara is also a journalist, author of five books and a doctoral student in the area of mental health. In her workshop Barbara will be honest speaking her own experience and will aim to raise the awareness for the reasons why some children wont report their offender or testify against them. *The session's content relates to child sexual abuse.*

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES: Presenter – **Rita Daher**

Rita is well known and highly respected within the CP & OOHC system. She has worked for 16 years of her professional life with children who have been abused in a residential setting and has seen first hand how abuse can impact on children's well being and development. She is now a private practitioner conducting care reviews, risk of harm investigations, carer and relative assessments for both DoCS and the Agencies.

Rita will provide an understanding of how, when and why children/young people disclose. There will be suggestions and tips on responding effectively without impacting on a potential investigative interview.

THE EFFECTS ON CHILDREN FROM THEIR PARENTS DRUG ABUSE: Presenter – **Dr. Joyce Leong MBBS FRACP**

Dr. Leong is a consultant Paediatrician and Physician in Adolescent Medicine, she has a continued interest in behavioral and developmental medicine from infancy to adulthood, affiliated with the Brain and Behaviour Centre at Westmead.

Her session will look at the effects of parental drug use on children, prenatally and postnatally. The presentation will be from a biological perspective to try and understand genetics patterns of inheritance as well as modifying environmental factors. Drugs that are commonly abused will be discussed.

CHALLENGES & OUTCOMES FOR MUSLIM CHILDREN IN OOHC: Presenters – **Metro Muslim Foster Care Team**

This workshop will highlight the importance of culturally and religiously appropriate placements and to raise the awareness of the MMFCP among caseworkers and foster carers. This will assist in the understanding of the need to establish the program, how to access and work with the programme. Also to develop an understanding in dealing with children and young people from Muslim backgrounds.

RAISING DIFFICULT TEENS: Presenter = **Mary Ann Goodearle**

Foster teens have all of the challenging behaviours that their peers have, in addition to behaviours instilled in them as the results of bad parenting, disorganized homes, maltreatment and separation from their birth parents. These kids come to us damaged. They present carers with behaviours that they most likely have never dealt with before such as, "Attachment Disorder", "Oppositional Defiant disorder", "ADHD", Depression and various learning disabilities and so on. At first it all sounds overwhelming. Mary will give you "five tips" for group discussion that will help you survive foster parenthood and teach your foster son or daughter some valuable life skills.

THE IMPACT OF FOSTERING ON CARERS CHILDREN: Presenter – *Kim Hawken*

Kim is the FPSN Regional Coordinator for the Northern Region, who, together with her husband Greg, have four birth children and have long term fostered five children. Four of these children are of a similar age to their own children, one is much younger. Kim will discuss how their birth children coped (or didn't cope) with the blended family as they reached adolescence and developed their own personalities. There will be group discussion to assist everybody with understanding their own issues that may have arisen as they meet daily challenges of growing these families all under the one roof without daily disasters.

MORE THAN GOOD ENOUGH CARING and the 'CIRCLE OF SECURITY': Presenter – *Sally Brown*

Sally has worked with children for 24 years, originally trained as an occupational therapist. In 1996 Sally was appointed Senior Occupational Therapist in the Dept of Psychological Medicine at the Children's Hospital, Westmead. She held this position for 10 years during which time she was developing specialized skills in the emotional and physical development needs of children with emotional and behavioral difficulties with a particular focus on the special needs of children in OOHC. Relationships involve investment and contribution, raising children is about relationships, children in OOHC have experienced relationships that have gone awry, they experience many losses and varying degrees of trauma which impact on their development, emotionally and physically. In Sally's workshop she will highlight the concept of the need to be more than a "good enough" foster carer and the possibilities for applying the 'Circle of Security' model.

A WALK IN THEIR SHOES: (FOR WORKERS) Presenter – *Mary Ann Goodrearle*

It takes time for individual carers to find their own comfort zone in dealing with both foster children and the professional workers. Unfortunately some quit before they get to that zone. Carers are a valuable resource. They are pivotal members on the child's care plan. As workers, you absolutely must understand what they need from you to do their jobs well. In order to have a winning team, each member is responsible for his or her job and expertise AND for helping the rest of the team members succeed. This session will let you 'walk' in the carer's shoes.

UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTS OF TRAUMA: Presenter – *Liz Mullinar A.M.*

Liz Mullinar is the founder of Mayumarri healing centre for survivors of child abuse. She became involved as an advocate for survivors of abuse when she discovered that no one was speaking on behalf of those who have been abused. She was co-founder and runs ASCA (Advocates for Survivors of Child Abuse) which has 55 branches. Liz has degrees in Counselling. Her session will assist both workers and carers understand how the behaviour of the foster children/young people can relate to the trauma they have suffered and how to effectively help them. Liz will cover the effect of trauma on the developing brain, the reasons for self harm and how to help teenagers with self harming tendencies, how to counteract the 'I don't know' reaction and knowing how to support and discipline more effectively.

DISABILITIES – IS THIS THE RIGHT SCHOOL FOR YOUR FOSTER CHILD: Presenter – *Pamela Templeton*

Pamela is assistant principal at Mater Dei School, Camden for children assessed with mild to moderate cognitive disability. Pamela's philosophy is firmly grounded on delivering a teaching/learning environment centered on dignity, respect, equity and justice for each and every student. She believes the educator must be responsible and accountable for the delivery of a finely tuned and balanced program understanding and focusing upon each student's gifts, talents,

skills, needs and stage of development. If you are fostering a child that is in the category, Pamela will help you identify if your child is in the right school.

'HAPPY LITTLE VEGEMITE' CULTURE AND CARE: Presenter – *Thanh Nguyen*

This workshop will look at the issues foster carers face in caring for children from a different language and cultural background to themselves. The presenters will respond to some of the questions foster carers frequently ask when caring for children from a different cultural background. How am I going to communicate with this child? I don't know anything about their cultural background? What will he/she expect of me? What if they have religious needs that are different from mine? How can I best help them?

A WALK IN THEIR SHOES: (FOR CARERS) Presenters – *DoCS*

You have probably been frustrated with telephone calls not being returned, worker visits not regular, etc etc. This session will give carers a better understanding of the process involved when a notification is received at the CSC in regard to a situation that needs attention from DoCS. The presenters will take you through this process and just for a moment you can 'walk' in the workers shoes.

The "Brighter Futures Programme" is a voluntary, targeted program designed for families encountering problems that impact on their ability to care for their children. Hopefully this programme will assist in retaining the family unit and the children not entering the "care" system. This is a new program initiated by DoCS. You will often hear this programme referred to during your time fostering. The presenters will explain this programme.