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October 18th, 2021

Supporting children and families across Australia

Telepractice venture supporting the transition to virtual services

To help families continue to access important support services through ongoing lockdowns around Australia, a group of leading agencies have developed a much-needed suite of freely available online resources to help the NGO sector provide effective and impactful virtual services.

The new telepractice resources have been developed by the NGO (Non-Government Organisations) Telepractice Venture, led by Karitane and the Parenting Research Centre with input from a group of leading NGO agencies and peak bodies, including the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA), as well as government support and representation from the NSW Department of Communities and Justice.

The Telepractice Venture was established in 2020 in response to COVID-19 and an increase in families experiencing a range of significant challenges and reduced face-to-face supports. The venture aimed to ensure positive outcomes for children and families by ensuring that even during a pandemic parents can continue to access support services.

The venture has focused on the delivery of a stepped continuum of care to families by building capacity for telepractice across the NGO sector, leveraging lessons learned and consolidating practice. This venture has increased NGO workforce capacity to deliver telepractice services and has developed a framework for organisations to adapt and embed telepractice services.

A new suite of resources and practice guides, including tips and checklists for practitioners engaging in telepractice supports for parents and families, is now available. There are also fourteen new training videos covering topics including organisational readiness for telepractice, adapting service models, measuring success, communicating over digital platforms, building partnerships with families over telepractice, building capacity in teams, motivating teams to embrace telepractice, supporting a remote workforce and more.

These resources are freely and publicly available to any organisation in Australia and internationally through the Parenting Research Centre Telepractice Hub at parentingrc.org.au/telepractice_hub/

Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services The Hon. Alister Henskens explains the critical importance of virtual services to support families and says the Venture is an outstanding example of collaboration across agencies.

“Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen a dramatic change in the way community services are delivered. Many services that were once only delivered face-to-face have pivoted to online delivery. The Telepractice Venture has played an important role in this shift and has provided practitioners with the guidance and resources they need to continue to support the children and families they work with in a virtual environment.

The NSW Government is proud to support this venture, which we know will help vulnerable and isolated families across NSW receive the parenting support they need. This is a great example of the sector coming together rapidly to support each other and to adapt to changing circumstances to ensure families most in need continue to receive high-quality services.”

“The Telepractice Venture is an excellent demonstration of the power of collaboration. In the last 18 months or so COVID, resultant restrictions and the overriding need to keep clients and workers safe, has dramatically changed how community services are delivered. The Telepractice Venture, led by the Parenting Research





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Centre and Karitane, emerged to support the development of expertise and confidence across the NGO community services sector in responding to existing and emerging needs of children, families and communities during this period. Organisations with expertise in supporting children and families have come together through the community of practice to share, and learn from one another; to test and refine their practice and resources. The result includes quality online resources to ensure families are supported even when face to face service delivery is not possible. Excitingly, these resources, and this growing knowledge and confidence will continue to support access to services into the future.” Anne Campbell, A/Deputy Secretary, Strategy, Policy and Commissioning.

Leaders from the group share their experience and achievements from the project.

“The shared collaboration and unique funding model were absolute highlights of this project. Karitane was pleased to bring our expertise in virtual care to help deliver a suite of telepractice resources and to support workforce capacity building at such a critical time for the sector.” Grainne O’Loughlin, Karitane CEO

“We’re so pleased to have worked together across our sector to equip essential workers with telepractice resources and skills so that parents can continue to access critical child and family services even if they can’t access these services face-to-face. Our telepractice resources give child and family services the potential to reach more families, more effectively – and to do this in a way that is supported by evidence.” Annette Michaux, Director Policy and Practice Parenting Research Centre

“Key Assets is very pleased to part of the investor group for the telepractice project. The collaborative learning and practical resources will be immensely valuable in being able to continue to offer services throughout COVID restrictions and to extend reach to vulnerable families.” Dr Dianne Jackson, CEO, Key Assets Australia

“This has been such an important initiative, providing a framework for online and phone-based work with children, young people, families and carers during continuing covid-19 restrictions and uncertainties. The need to innovate and be creative in the way we support children, families and carers through out-of-home care services has been critical over the past year, and the resources created through this joint venture are a great example of NGOs coming together to find solutions that really make a difference.” Jane French, Life Without Barriers Executive Director Child, Youth and Family.

“The way we engage with our families has changed since the pandemic arrived. Participating in this project provides a great opportunity to work with a group of committed professional organisations to give our team members the tools they need to ensure their practice continues to be evidence based and family focused.” Wendy Field, The Smith Family, Head of Policy and Programs.

“This initiative, which involved non-government and government agencies working together, illustrates how we can greatly enhance our support for vulnerable families, by having a shared vision for what’s needed, coupled with strong governance arrangements that deliver the right plan and ensure that it is well executed.” Steve Kinmond, ACWA CEO.





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TELEPRACTICE VENTURE INVESTOR GROUP

ABOUT NSW DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES AND JUSTICE (DCJ)

The NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) has brought together Family and Community Services and Justice. The establishment of DCJ will enable us to better work together to support everyone's right to access justice and other help for families and to deliver services with a more unified and collaborative approach, with benefits for the whole community. Our purpose is to help create a safe, just, resilient and inclusive NSW in which everyone has the opportunity to realise their potential. We are accountable for seven of the NSW State Outcomes: safer communities; efficient and effective legal system; reduce reoffending; prepared for disasters and emergencies; active and inclusive communities; children and families thrive; and people have a safe and affordable place to live.

ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S WELFARE AGENCIES (ACWA)

ACWA is the peak body for the NSW child and family services sector. We work closely with our members, government and non-government agencies, and other peak bodies, to bring about effective systems reform that will achieve better outcomes for families, children and young people, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

ABOUT KARITANE

Karitane is a not-for-profit organisation that supports families, builds parenting capacity, and enhances parent-child relationships through evidence-based services and programs. Karitane are leaders in parenting services with a multidisciplinary team of health professionals supporting parents particularly in the first 2,000 days with sleep and settling, feeding and nutrition, establishing routines, toddler behaviour, conduct disorders/emotional dysregulation and pre and post-natal anxiety and depression.

ABOUT PARENTING RESEARCH CENTRE

The Parenting Research Centre helps children thrive by driving new and better ways to support families in their parenting. We help governments and community organisations in the fields of health, education and welfare put the best evidence on parenting support into action through research and evaluation, knowledge translation and exchange, practice design and implementation projects.

ABOUT KEY ASSETS

Key Assets Australia is a non-government, not-for-profit children, family and community services agency. Key Assets was founded in Australia in 2007 and has grown to provide a wide range of out of home care, family support services, and disability services in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia, Victoria and Norfolk Island. We work in collaboration with statutory bodies, partner agencies and with foster carers to continue developing an innovative range of services for families, children, and young people to make a positive and lasting difference to their lives.

ABOUT LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS

Life Without Barriers is a charitable organisation supporting close to 23,000 people living in over 400 communities across the nation. We provide people with the services and assistance they need so they can achieve their goals and maximise their opportunities to participate as fully in society as they wish. Our services include disability support; children, youth & families; and aged care.

ABOUT SOCIAL FUTURES

Social Futures is a regionally based not-for-profit expert in tailoring programs to fit our diverse local communities. Our service footprint reaches across more than 50 per cent of NSW. For more than 40 years we have been creating positive social change in regional Australia. We work directly with individuals, families,





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communities, organisations and governments across our focus areas of homelessness and housing, youth and family, community inclusivity and programs that promote genuine participation for people with disability. We are a regional leader and work alongside our partner organisations to strengthen and build capacity within the community sector by providing training, development and advocacy.

ABOUT THE SMITH FAMILY

The Smith Family is a children's education charity that helps disadvantaged young Australians to succeed at school, so they can create better futures for themselves.

ABOUT UNITING CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

Uniting has a long and proud history of investing in programs that support and empower children, young people, First Australians, and socially and economically excluded communities, to improve their engagement with society, their opportunities and outcomes. Uniting has more than 36,000 clients and 900 committed team members across more than 100 locally targeted programs in NSW and the ACT, encompassing early learning, family restoration and parenting skills, youth housing and employment, out-of-home care and counselling and mediation.

SUPPORTER AGENCY

ABOUT MY FOREVER FAMILY NSW

My Forever Family NSW recruits, supports, trains and advocates for foster and kinship carers, guardians, and adoptive parents from out-of-home care across the state. Funded by the NSW Government and operated by Adopt Change, My Forever Family cares for those who care for kids.

