

'Side By Side':

A Respectful Relationships Education Project

Project Information

About WHIN

Women's Health In the North (WHIN) is the women's health service for Melbourne's northern metropolitan region and is committed to improving the health, safety and wellbeing of women. WHIN's vision is that all women in the northern region have voice, choice and power in all aspects of their health and wellbeing.

WHIN has a strategic focus on preventing violence against women, sexual and reproductive health, economic participation, environmental justice and gender equity.

Project Background and Context

WHIN has received funding from the Commonwealth Department of Social Services for the 'Side by Side' project. This project will result in the development of a respectful relationships education module for communities affected by female genital cutting (FGC). The education module will be designed to be delivered as a complementary component to existing respectful relationships and sexual and reproductive health programs in secondary schools, tertiary education settings and women's groups. The project will build on WHIN's existing 'Girls Talk Health' program, a six week sexual and reproductive health program for young women from communities affected by FGC. The project will contribute to efforts to eliminate the practice of FGC by reaching women and girls across the NMR who are affected by or at risk of the practice.

'Side by Side' will provide a vital missing link between existing respectful relationships and sexual and reproductive health programs for communities affected by FGC. It will explore what a respectful relationship is in the context of good sexual health practices, deliver much-needed FGC education in a culturally relevant, supportive and respectful way, while also addressing the links between sexual health and gendered violence.

Research highlights the importance of gender equality in the development of respectful relationships: to prevent violence against women before it occurs we must address gender equality in our communities, namely by challenging the condoning of violence against women, promoting

women's independence; challenging gender stereotypes and roles; strengthening positive, equal and respectful relationships; promoting and normalising gender equality in public and private life.

The 'Side by Side' education module will provide women with the tools to make healthy and informed decisions about respectful relationships and sexual and reproductive health in their current and future relationships, and to identify the early warning signs of intimate partner violence.

The education module and supporting resources will be designed to be delivered in a safe environment where participants are free to explore what a respectful relationship looks like in the context of cultural expectations. The program will make the link between respectful relationships and good sexual and reproductive health.

WHIN has existing extensive partnerships with a wide range of organisations in its catchment, including community health services, hospitals, education providers and local government. The 'Side by Side' project will draw on these partnerships to establish a group of critical friends to inform the content development of the module and resources, knowledge translation and transferability to a variety of sites and settings.

Timeline

The project will be completed by August 2019.

Contact Details

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