

Community Development in Health

A Resources Collection

A collection of resource materials for community workers in health prepared by the Community Development in Health Project, District Health Councils Program, Victoria.

Funded by the National Health Promotion Program,
Commonwealth Department of Community Services and Health

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230 High Street, MorLhcoLc VIC 3070

November 1988

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First published in 1988 by
Community Development in Health Project,
Preston/Northcote District Health Council,
230 High Street, Northcote VIC 3070
Reprinted with corrections 1989

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National Library of Australia; Cataloguing-in-publication entry:
Community Development in Health
A Fcsuu recs Collection
ISBN 0 716 3318 0

Design and production by John Ringer
Printed by Imprenta Pty Ltd, Abbotsford

(Peer Support in Community Development produced by People Projects)

Introduction

This resources collection has been developed to contribute to a greater understanding of the theory and to strengthen the practice of community development work in health.

Community development has become recognized in health as having a useful and important role to play particularly in addressing many of the pressing health problems facing our society.

Persisting inequalities in the health of different groups within our society is perhaps the most important issue today.

Blue collar workers have higher mortality rates than business and professional people. Aboriginal people have far poorer health outcomes than do the the broader Australian community. Women and people of non-English speaking backgrounds report frustrations with the adequacy and delivery of health care services. These are some of the problems where the community development approach can make a significant contribution.

Being poor and unable to buy a safe living environment or afford appropriate health care is an important part of the the story. More fundamental are the ways in which health and sickness arc embedded within the social context of people's lives.

Community development is based on an understanding of these inequalities. People's health experiences are seen within the the context of their social relationships. In this framework alienation and powerlessness arc identified as linked to poorer health outcomes; having a sense of not belonging to the broader society, a sense of not having much control over one's destiny.

A developmental approach involves working in ways that facilitate people and communities developing their strength and confidence while al the same time addressing immediate problems.

The central strategy of the community development in health project was to learn from community workers and groups in the health field. Throughout the project three streams of work were undertaken which involved those in the field: in consultation, planning and resource development.

Consultation included seminars in several stales and presentations at the 1988 Australian Community Hcalth Association conference: distribution of a newsletter; and on-going discussions of the redrafting of the overview working paper.

As part of this process a resources "prospectus" was outlined and circulated in order to clarify with others the purpose, audience, design and the content of each resource. Working groups which included contributors from the community health field, staff and steering committee members of the project were formed to undertake detailed planning for each of the resources in the collection.

We arc grateful to the many people who have contributed their ideas and comments on discussion papers, case studies of community development projects, listings of available resources, network organisations and contact people.

The collection has been designed so that readers can easily find the sections most relevant to their needs. The booklets can be used in a variety of settings and users may like to add other references they have found relevant to community development. We hope that the collection will also encourage others to document their understandings and experiences of community development in health.

Acknowledgments

The presentation of this Resources Collection has been made possible because of the enthusiastic involvement and contributions of many different people Australia-wide. In particular, we are grateful to members of the Steering Committee and Working Groups and to all those who participated in workshop discussions and provided stories, contacts and references for the collection.

The District Health Councils Program, Victoria, has managed the project, which was located with and administered by the Preston and Northcote District Health Council. The Commonwealth Department of Health granted funding for the project and production of the collection.

A great many thanks are due to the following people and organisations who have offered on-going advice and ideas in the course of producing the collection;

Ian Lennie, Denise Fry and staff of the Australian Community Health Association.

Ali Sinclair, Chris Sanderson and staff of Social Health Office, South Australia.

Alan Owen, Eastern Area Health Service, NSW.

Mark Grant and Leslie Iloaton, Ellen Klc.inmaker and Tony McBride for their continuing involvement and contribution in drafting discussion papers.

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The Community Development in Health Project, District Health Councils Program, Victoria.

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Contents

1. Health and Illness in a Social Context and the Role of Community Development

A paper which analyses the historical influences and outlines a theoretical perspective of community development in health.

2. Discussion papers on Planning, Evaluation, Research and Accountability

A paper which raises the specific issues of planning, evaluation, research and accountability in relation to community development work.

A composition paper which outlines current tools and methods used to facilitate planning, and evaluation of community work.

3. Case Studies in Community Development in Health

A booklet of six Australian case studies which document recent community development projects.

4. Bibliography and Reading Guide

An annotated introductory reading guide and comprehensive bibliography.

5. Directory of Resources

A listing of network organisation, education programs and audio-visual resources with a community development focus.

6. Peer Support in Community Development

Documentation of a process to form a peer support and skill development group for workers involved in community development activities.

7. Selected Reading

The Continuum, a paper which discusses community development approaches to health.

