

Parenting support for rural and remote families

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Introduction/Background

There is an identified need to provide parenting support and information for some country parents who, for a variety of reasons, are not able to access all available WA Country Health Service (WACHS) child health services.

Aim/Purpose of the project

WACHS is working in partnership with Ngala to explore the use of a range of technology based strategies to provide child health services close to home for regional, rural and remote families. The pilot is exploring effectiveness, uptake and client satisfaction of using technology based methods to support country parents. The Ngala pilot complements existing local WACHS services. .

Methods/Process/Who is being studied

The Country Families at Ngala team commenced service delivery in September 2018. The target group is all parents of children from birth to eight years old resident in WACHS regions. Child health nurses provide information and support through the Ngala website, social media platforms including Facebook, Facebook Live, group webinars and parenting sessions, online chat, and telephone support. Families requiring extra support are offered additional Ngala services, referral and are linked into local WACHS services.

A joint steering group guides the project. The program is adjusted in response to consumer feedback and service demand.

Results/Outcome

The pilot has achieved reach into all seven WACHS regions. Parents from regional, rural and remote communities have accessed the service. Indicative findings are that parents prefer telephone to video calls for individual consultations, but enjoy the interactive nature of video webinars. The most common issues discussed during consultations were child sleep, unsettled baby and breastfeeding issues. Parenting webinars about sleep, toddler behaviour and managing a baby and a toddler attract the biggest audience.

Recommendations/Conclusion

Early evidence suggests that families value the service and uptake has met WACHS expectations, however final evaluation of the program will inform future technology based parenting services.