SMART
Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma

Australian
Childhood Foundation
Protecting Children

Discussion Paper 2

Ideas for integrating SMART into school policies and processes

Introduction

This is a short discussion paper that outlines ways in which the SMART program can be integrated into school policies and processes.

The paper is the basis for the second SMART online discussion forum to be run between 19/9/06 – 3/10/06. It compliments and extends the training provided through the SMART program. The SMART Program is an initiative of the South Australian Government Department of Education and Children's Services.

The second SMART online discussion forum encourages participants to share with each other ideas for reviewing and developing policies to support children in schools who have experienced chronic traumatisation.

In particular it examines how to incorporate SMART into child protection policies at school. It also explores how SMART PRACTICE fits into the auditing requirements of the National Safe Schools Framework.

Section 1. SMART considerations in reviewing school child protection policies

This framework provides some key questions to consider when developing or reviewing a child protection policy for your school. It also offers some pointers as to what you might include in the policy.

What are the commitments that underpin our policy?

- The safety and wellbeing of students and staff are paramount.
- We take action to protect children and young people.
- We listen to children and young people.
- We work to create a safe, predictable and nurturing learning environment.
- We support of all staff in their role of protecting children.
- We understand that the behaviour of traumatised children and young people results from their experiences of abuse and violation.
- Our responses to traumatised children and young people will be sensitive to the impact of trauma on their capacities to learn, moderate their behaviour and develop supportive and positive relationships.

What are the expectations of our staff in our policy?

- We will meet the legislative requirements of a mandatory reporting.
- We will consider the meaning of students' behaviour in the context of their traumatic experiences.
- We will aim to understand the significance of family relationships for students and the need to engage the family where possible and appropriate.
- We respect cultural and religious beliefs and practices but not above a student's right to protection.
- We will not harm or exploit students in our school.

Are the roles of staff members in our policy clearly delineated?

- Who reviews the policy?
- Who makes the notification?
- Who supports the notifier?
- Who shares responsibility for supporting the student following a notification?
- What is the process for developing a student support team following notification?
- Does the policy clearly outline these responsibilities and how they are managed within our school?

Do we have a clear pathway/flowchart for the notification process?

- We are clear about who at school will be told about the concerns about a child.
- We have a clear set of questions that we will answer prior to notifying a child to Families SA.
- We have different responses clearly defined depending on the circumstances in which the abuse occurs.

Is the support process for students through notification clearly defined?

- We will support children during and after the notification process
- We are clear who is responsible for supporting children during the investigation process

Is the support process for staff through notification clearly defined?

- Our staff are aware of this policy and receive training regularly about it.

Does the policy include a clear review procedure?

- We have in place key measures that we can evaluate to determine how well the policy is working.

Section 2. How does SMART fit within the audit requirements for the National Safe Schools Framework?

The SMART program provides an easy and clear marker for schools to report on as part of the audit requirements for the National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF). The implementation of SMART Program at school is particularly relevant to Key elements 3 and 5 of the NSSF. In this section, we report on how schools have used the SMART Program to fulfil their obligations under the NSSF.

The examples used under each of the headings are drawn from reports from schools in Districts that have already undertaken the training and engaged in some element of the SMART Program.

NSSF Key element 3 - Provision of education/training for all staff (in relation to child protection)

- Understanding the effects of abuse and neglect on the development of children and young people
    - SMART 2 hour staff T & D session facilitated
    - SMART online training undertaken by X% of staff group
- Complying with agreed policies and procedures related to child protection
    - Reviewed child protection policy as outlined previously in this paper
- Keeping themselves safe
    - Ensured principles of self-care and understanding of secondary traumatic stress are included in child protection policy and wellbeing framework
- Additional training conducted for staff with specific roles in child protection to provide support to students who are the subject of concerns about abuse or neglect
    - School welfare personnel have undergone SMART 2 day workshop
    - SMART online training undertaken by X% of staff group

NSSF Key element 3 - Provision of education/training for parents and carers

- Engagement in whole school planning processes
- Parent information sessions - child protection and supporting children
    - Summary of SMART workshop included in newsletter to parents
    - Developed a 3 page summary of SMART program accessible to parents and governing council
    - Facilitated a parent information session with strategies for supporting children

NSSF Key element 5 - Providing support for students

- Focuses on restoring the wellbeing of students who have been affected by abuse or trauma through the provision of adequate social support and counselling
    - Implementation of SMART PRACTICE model
    - SMART support plans developed and used with specific children
- Maintains their connectedness to schooling, including facilitating reintegration into the school of those involved in harmful behaviour
    - Implementation of restorative justice practices
    - Incorporated SMART PRACTICE into behaviour management protocols and distribute to whole school community
- Provides opportunities for individual students to develop more socially appropriate behaviour and coping skills
    - Implementation of SMART PRACTICE model

Section 3. Questions for the online discussion forum

Use this series of questions to prompt your participation in the first online discussion forum.

To take part in the online discussion forum, click here -
http://www.childhood.org.au/smart/news.asp

It is easy to take part. Choose a question, think of your answer, follow this link and write down your thoughts and comments.

You can also follow this link if you want to pose a question about a child that you are currently supporting at your school. Ask your colleagues for some advice and ideas.

You can follow this link to read and respond to what your colleagues are saying about the topic.

Consider these questions

1.   What elements of SMART have you found to be effective in the review of child protection and student well-being policies children in your school?

2.   What is an example of a way in which you have applied the SMART approach to the policy review process? Describe the ways in which you approached this and critical issues you encountered in the process.

3.   What are the three factors that schools should consider in reviewing policies for supporting children who have experienced abuse related trauma?

4.   What parts of the school network have you drawn into the review process? What resources have these people offered?

5.   What is the most important piece of advice that you would want to share with your colleagues about undertaking a review of policies that incorporate the SMART approach?

6.   How would you include the initiative your school has undertaken as a result of SMART in the auditing requirements of National Safe Schools Framework?

Remember, this SMART online discussion forum runs between 19/9/06 – 3/10/06. After this time, you will be able to read an archive of the discussion but will no longer be able to take part.