

CONCURRENT PRESENTATIONS

Peer Supervision in rural and remote Australia using technology

Amanda NICKSON

James Cook University, Australia

Introduction: Research trialing models of peer supervision using technology as a way to strengthen resilience, was undertaken for twelve months in rural and remote Australia. A lack of supervision and access to professional development activities are two factors contributing to the turnover of allied health professionals and difficulties in recruiting and retaining social workers in rural and remote Australia. Cuss (2005) and Symmons (2005).

Purpose: To share findings from this research and present peer supervision as a viable option and a way to build resilience. It is transferable / applicable to other professions and locations.

Methodology: This qualitative research uses an interpretivist approach, that is, interpretation or the act of making sense out of



Amanda Nickson has worked as a social worker for almost thirty years. Amanda graduated in 1983 with a Bachelor of Social Work at University of New South Wales, and in 1999 with a Master of Social Work at James Cook University, Townsville. She is currently doing a

successful than unstructured groups. Themes from the data confirm that isolation was overcome by connecting with professionals in similar work situations. Benefit from the experiences of multiple group members is noteworthy.

Lessons learned: A structured model for peer group supervision is successful. Telephone conference calls work well and are cost effective. The model and technology is readily available and replicable for other professionals. Comments on group size and models are offered.

Conclusion: The success of the trial will be of interest to social work and other professions wanting effective and accessible ways of providing professional supervision. It is suggested that this can positively affect recruitment and retention and contribute to resilience in rural and remote areas.

small mining community, before moving to Townsville at the end of 1992. In Townsville Amanda again worked for Child Safety in Alternate Care; the Defence Community Organisation; Townsville Community Legal Service as a community educator; and Centrelink as a Senior Social Worker before starting as Field Education Co-ordinator and Lecturer at James Cook University Townsville in July 2005.

She is currently a lecturer in the Department of Social Work and Human Services at James Cook University. Her PhD research and passion is in peer supervision of social workers in rural and remote Australia using technology.