

# **RAS Clinical Activities at Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre (MRRC)**

## **3. RAS Services for Asylum Seekers**

### **3.1. Initial Individual Contact with Community Co-ordinator**

#### **1. Rationale**

Many Asylum Seekers have had traumatic backgrounds and arrive in New Zealand with high levels of anxiety, fear and uncertainty regarding their future residency status and protection possibilities. Like the Quota Refugees they also face culture shock, possibly grief from multiple losses, and find themselves in an unfamiliar environment. RAS provides an opportunity for orientation to the Centre and an invitation to use the mental health services. The initial individual assessment by the Community Co-ordinator/cultural advisor provides an opportunity to make an informal assessment of their needs and to refer on to a clinician if necessary. Some Asylum Seekers may come from cultures that do not share the same mental health approach or services as those offered in New Zealand and this interview provides an opportunity for explanation of our approach.

#### **2. Objectives**

- to meet and welcome new arrivals and to offer the support of a cultural advisor
- to introduce RAS clinical services and activities
- to identify cultural/social and clinical issues that may need addressing
- to provide an opportunity for referral for clinical treatment

#### **3. Procedure**

New Zealand Immigration staff from the hostel inform RAS when a new Asylum Seeker arrives at MRRC. They provide details of the client and the room number in which he/she will be residing during the course of his/her stay. The Community Co-ordinator then contacts the client and invites them for an interview. If a clinical referral is required, an internal referral form is completed and the Intake Co-ordinator will oversee the process in the same manner as the other referrals received at RAS.

## 3.2. Clinical Assessment and Treatment

### 1. Referrals

Referrals are received from the following sources:

- Initial Assessment by Community Co-ordinator
- Medical Clinic after their screening process, and during the course of the Asylum seekers' stay at MRRC
- Internal referrals between disciplines at RAS
- Clients who self-refer during the course of their stay
- Other agencies at MRRC - AUT (Auckland University of Technology), RMS (Refugee and Migrant Services), NZIS (New Zealand Immigration Services) may also refer clients at any point during their residence at MRRC

### 2. Objectives

- to assess mental health status and level of psychological functioning on arrival
- to assess the impact of past traumatic experiences on present functioning
- to assess the need for ongoing treatment
- to provide short-term, focused psychological treatment
- to provide culturally appropriate interventions
- to facilitate a positive and accessible experience of the NZ mental health system in order to encourage refugees to seek services after leaving MRRC
- to make referrals to appropriate mental health service providers in the community when possible

### 3. Procedure

When referrals are received they are approved and allocated by the Intake Co-ordinator to a clinician, a file is opened, and the client is booked with the clinician and an appropriate interpreter. For clients who have been referred by other agencies an acknowledgement of *receipt of referral* is sent.

#### 4. Assessment and Treatment

Clients (adults and children) are assessed by a Psychologist/Counselor/Body Therapist/Psychiatrist with an interpreter as required, and respective follow-up treatments are provided as appropriate during the remaining weeks of their stay. After an initial assessment clients may be referred internally to another clinician of an alternative discipline. A multidisciplinary clinical meeting (including a representative from the Medical Clinic and from RMS) is held weekly to discuss management of clients and special needs.

All clients are discharged at the end of treatment, or when they are transferred from MRRC by NZIS. Clients who require on-going treatment are referred to appropriate services in Auckland as available. A *Discharge Summary* is completed for all clients and for those clients referred on this will be sent to the relevant contact.

#### 5. Forms involved in Assessment and Treatment procedures:

- *Internal Referral form* (if referral is internal or from SAG)
- *Initial Assessment form* to be completed by the end of treatment sessions
- Acknowledgement of *receipt of referral* to referring agency
- *Discharge Summary*
- *Consent forms* for treatment of children
- *Various forms* for clients being referred on to other services at discharge

### 3.3 Groups

#### 3.3.1 Psychotherapy Groups

##### 1. Rationale

This service is offered to all Asylum Seekers resident at MRRC. Since many Asylum Seekers may remain in the centre for a period of time it is necessary for them to have a forum in which to express and process their anxiety and frustration resulting from uncertainty or prolonged detention. The group provides an opportunity for them to receive emotional support, to develop a support network and to share information and experiences about their circumstances and new environment.

##### 2. Objectives

- to make a clinical assessment of individual's mental health states
- to provide emotional support
- to provide a safe environment to process emotional material related to past experiences or to other current issues
- to provide an opportunity to develop a support network amongst themselves
- to provide an opportunity to enhance their coping skills

### **3. Procedure**

A psychotherapy group is facilitated by a psychologist and interpreter/s as required on a weekly basis. Asylum Seekers are invited to attend the open group on an elective basis.

#### **3.3.2 Support/Social Group**

##### **1. Rationale**

Since Asylum Seekers reside in MRRC for a period of time, a Social Support group is offered to them to structure and occupy some of their time. The aim is to avoid isolation, stress, anxiety and depression while they are waiting for their application to be processed. The Social Support group provides a space for them to share their experiences and coping skills around this process. The group also provides some orientation about New Zealand lifestyle and offers the opportunity for communication between asylum seekers of different ethnicities

##### **2. Objectives**

- to provide a space for peer support
- to maintain motivation
- to provide a proactive approach to preventing isolation, depression and hopelessness
- to provide opportunities for asylum seekers to engage in physical activities.
- to create a safe place for them to talk in their own language

##### **3. Procedure**

A social/support group is facilitated by the Community Co-ordinator using interpreter/s as required on a weekly basis. Asylum Seekers are invited to attend the open group on a voluntary basis.

#### **3.3.3 Information**

The 'Resource and Capacity Building Program for Asylum Seekers' is a new project being developed at RAS and to be launched in 2006. The aim of the program is to take care of the mental health needs and the overall emotional well-being of Asylum Seekers by providing professional help and support.

The program has three objectives:

- to provide the Asylum Seekers with an opportunity to explore information related to Immigration, Law, Health issues etc.
- to evolve process orientated groups which are focused in nature.
- to introduce vocational activities.