

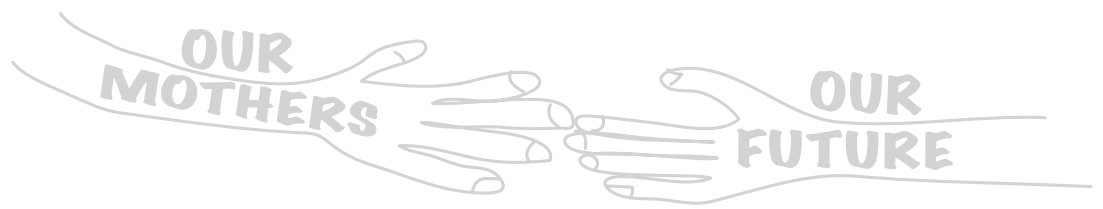


Strong Women, Strong Babies Strong Culture Program

Information for Strong Women Workers, Government
and Non Government Professionals

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Overview of the Strong Women Strong Babies Strong Culture (SWSBSC) Program

The SWSBSC Program is a bi-cultural, community development program that respects and supports the Aboriginal way of promoting good health in women and babies during pregnancy and early parenting.

Aboriginal women deliver the program to Aboriginal women, combining traditional Aboriginal and current Western knowledge. Aboriginal Grandmothers and identified younger women use the program to promote strong women and strong babies by supporting and passing on traditional ways to pregnant mothers and keeping the Grandmothers Law alive.

The SWSBSC Program started late in 1993 following a prospective study of pregnancy and outcomes in three Top End communities. (Milingimbi, Galiwinku and Port Keats.) The study showed that inadequate maternal nutritional status, before and during pregnancy, contributed to a high prevalence of low birth weight. 27.7% of infants were small for gestational age (SGA) (Rae 1989).

Identified risk factors for SGA infants included; late attendance for pregnancy care (after 20 weeks), pre-pregnancy weight less than 43 kg, pregnancy weight gain less than 8 kg, younger than 19 years, and less than four previous children. Other factors attributed to poor pregnancy outcomes were infection and substance abuse. eg smoking and alcohol consumption.

The need to improve; early attendance for pregnancy care, nutritional status and interventions for smoking and alcohol consumption during pregnancy was recognised. A trial of the SWSBSC program in the three Top End Communities (Milingimbi, Galiwin'ku and Port Keats) shows a decrease in the rate of low birth weight babies born to mothers in these communities compared to other communities in the Top End at the time (¹). Based on these results the SWSBSC program was introduced to other communities throughout the Northern Territory (NT) to a total of seventeen communities at one time. It met with varying degrees of success and is currently running in ten NT communities.

1 Mackerras 1998

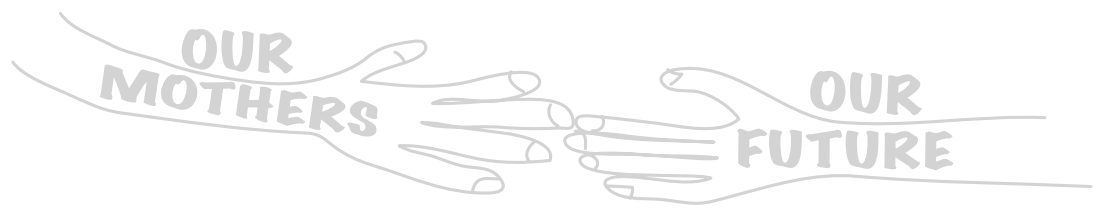
Program Aims and Objectives

Program Aims:

- Provide culturally appropriate education regarding pregnancy and birth to adolescent girls,
- Provide pregnancy, birth, postnatal, women's health and child health education to pregnant women and mothers of infants and young children,
- Address the modifiable risk factors during pregnancy for low birth weight eg nutrition, substance abuse, hygiene, homemakers program, male partners support, early pregnancy care attendance.

Program Objectives:

- Increase involvement in cultural ceremonies and tradition for women
- Ensure that families support and care for women during pregnancy
- Encourage women to access early pregnancy care
- Increase nutritional status and weight gain during pregnancy
- Decrease the rate of infections during pregnancy
- Improve growth and nutritional status of children 0-12mths
- Provide appropriate postnatal education
- Decrease rates of substance abuse during pregnancy ie smoking and alcohol consumption



Roles and Responsibilities of Key Stakeholders

- The Department of Health and Families - Maternal Child Youth Health Program
- Strong Women Coordinators
- Strong Women Workers
- Remote Communities
- Remote Health Centre staff

Department of Health and Families – Maternal Child Youth Health Program

- Employment of Strong Women Workers according to current conditions of employment and salary in the Public Sector Policy.
- Provision of;
 - Job Descriptions,
 - Duty Statements and
 - Recruitment process.
- Evaluate each position through the Job Evaluation System to determine correct level of employment. Process to include recognition of cultural protocols and variation of roles over time and between regions.
- Work in partnership with SW Coordinators and SWW to define core business of SWSBSC Program to achieve agreed aims and objectives taking into consideration cultural respect and law.
- Manage the Program through the SW Coordinators and Maternal Child Youth Health Coordinators and Program Director
- Inform employees of the conditions of employment and remote area entitlements
- Provide resources needed to support the program eg work space, access to office equipment, resources and transport.
- Provide an evaluation framework to guide future direction of the program.
- Develop a communication strategy to promote the SWSBSC program across the NT and foster improved understanding of program activities.
- Support professional development and training requirements as per current professional development guidelines for DHF employees.

Strong Women Coordinators

- Provide management support through assisting SWW to:
 - plan and develop a yearly work plan including activities
 - provide monthly reports and statistics used for evaluation
 - promote program and program activities within their communities through meetings with key stakeholders including Health Board, Health Centre staff, community services.
 - Promote the role of the SWW to foster understanding of non-clinical activities and support of community-based role.
- Link SWSBSC program with relevant programs in DHF ie Remote Outreach Midwives, Group Midwifery Practice, Health Centre staff, Women's Centres, Health Board.
- Provide management support to SWW and act as advocate in DHF forums.
- Work in partnership with SWW to define core business of SWSBSC Program to achieve agreed aims and objectives taking into consideration cultural respect and law.
- Work in partnership with SWW and MCYH Management to identify program boundaries and guidelines for practice.
- Complete Work Partnership Plans and facilitate professional development opportunities.
- Travel to the communities each month to provide face-to-face management support.
- Provide information and assistance to understand conditions of employment and negotiate eg TOIL and travel.
- Presentations at conferences, workshop, annual girls cultural camp and education



Strong Women Workers

- Share the Strong Women Strong Babies Strong Culture Program story with pregnant women and with young girls before pregnancy
- Work with community women/ health staff to have traditional ceremonies for women and babies.
- Encourage women to access pregnancy care early in their pregnancy.
- Work with pregnant women and new mothers to practice and pass on traditional midwifery knowledge
- Support women during pregnancy – provide education about nutrition and healthy lifestyle.
- Support and assist young mothers and their babies with Grandmothers Law
- Develop a yearly work plan in collaboration with their Strong Women Coordinator to reach their goals.
- Report to the Coordinator on the SWSBSC activities in the community every fortnight. A variety of methods are utilised for reporting including verbal reports, video recording, photos and written stories/reports.
- Work in partnership with SWSBSC Coordinators and the Health Care team to plan and implement evidence based improvements to the program in accordance with evaluation outcomes.
- Work in accordance with the Public Sector Employment policy. Work undertaken external to the Program requires permission from the DHF employer and negotiation with the individual and external employing agency.
- Work in partnership with SW Coordinators and SWW to define core business of SWSBSC Program to achieve agreed aims and objectives taking into consideration cultural respect and law.
- Meet with community stakeholder's (Health Board and Health Centre staff) to report on the program's activities and discuss community support. Coordinator's can assist to collate the report and organise this meeting.
- Attend yearly education workshop in Darwin/Alice Springs and other education and training as identified through your Work Partnership Plan. You need to meet with your coordinator to discuss this plan.
- Identify resource requirements through discussion with SW Coordinator.
- Plan and implement workshops with the support of Strong Woman Coordinator.
- Presentation at conference with Strong Woman Coordinator.

Remote Health Centre Staff

- Be informed of the SWSBSC program and support activities of the program
- Recognise and respect the community based role of the SWW and negotiate the use of the SWW in providing cultural brokerage or other work through a formalised agreement to ensure adequate remuneration for services provided. Negotiation for work provided external to the SWSBSC program requires negotiation through SW Coordinators and SWW, with DHF approval.
- Refer pregnant women to the program
- Work collaboratively with the SWW to fulfil program aims and objectives.
- Meet with the SWSBSC program staff to discuss program outcomes and activities and collaborative activities to facilitate improved outcomes for women and babies.

Remote Communities

- Be informed of the SWSBSC program and support activities of the program
- Support use of existing office space and facilities within the community where able.
- Meet with the SWSBSC staff regularly to discuss program outcomes and activities.



Appendix 1

Activities for Strong Women Workers

The following activities are suggested activities for Strong Women Workers. Individuals may develop other suitable activities for their communities.

Activities - Keeping Women Strong

Encourage adolescent women, pregnant women and mothers to:

- Take part in cultural ceremonies and traditions
- Have regular health checks at the clinic
- Be active and move their bodies more
- Eat bush foods
- Use bush medicine
- Eat healthy store foods
- Practice safe sex (when they have sex)
- Avoid grog, gunja, kava, tobacco
- Ask for help when they are worried about domestic violence

Encourage families to support pregnant women and mothers.

Activities - Keeping Babies and Children Strong

Encourage mothers and families:

- Take part in cultural ceremonies and traditions
- To involve babies and young children in cultural ceremonies and traditions
- To keep newborn babies in a safe and healthy environment
- To take babies and young children to the clinic for growth checks and immunisation
- To exclusively breastfeed babies until 6 months
- To give young babies solid foods (6 months)
- To feed older babies and children bush foods
- To feed older babies and children healthy store foods
- To give kids who are not growing well 'catch-up foods'
- To buy healthy food for kids before they use money for other things

Other Activities:

- Talk to young women at the school
- Talk to pregnant women or new mothers in small groups
- Talk to family groups
- Talk to council and community groups
- Teach women how to cook store foods
- Visit the store to show healthy foods
- Go out bush for ceremonies, food and medicine
- Be part of community activities (eg women's camp, no anaemia day)
- Use art to tell the strong women story
- Help health care providers talk to women
- Help health providers with health promotion activities



Activities - Keeping Culture Strong

Encourage women, children and families:

- To take part in cultural ceremonies and traditions
- To eat bush foods
- To use bush medicine

Encourage health care providers:

- To support cultural ceremonies and traditions
- To use culturally appropriate language and actions

Activities Strong Women Workers can do:

- Go out bush for ceremonies, food and medicine
- Go on a women's camp
- Talk to health care providers
- Talk to women, children and families
- Talk to council and community groups
- Use art to tell the strong culture stories
- Plant a bush food and bush medicine garden

Appendix 2

Support People and contacts

Name and Title	Contact Details
Marlene Liddle SWSBSC Program Coordinator	Department of Health and Families PO Box 40596 Darwin NT 0811 Telephone: 08 8922 7766 Facsimile: 08 8922 7799 E-mail: marlene.liddle@nt.gov.au
Terry Cubillo SWSBSC Program Coordinator	Department of Health and Families PO Box 40596 Darwin NT 0811 Telephone: 08 8922 7816 Facsimile: 08 8922 7799 E-mail: terry.cubillo@nt.gov.au
Julie Hill SWSBSC Program Coordinator	Department of Health and Families Alice Springs NT Telephone: 08 8955 6106 Facsimile: 08 8952 9087 E-mail: julie.hill@nt.gov.au
Barbara Cox SWSBSC Program Coordinator	Department of Health and Families PO Box 40596 Darwin NT 0811 Telephone: 08 8922 8160 Facsimile: 08 8922 7799 E-mail: barbara.cox@nt.gov.au



Resources

Information Pamphlet

Education Kit: *Talking to post-primary girls*

Education Kit: *Talking to antenatal women*

Education Kit: *Talking to mothers and carers of young babies*

Video: *Part 1 Introduction to the SWSBSC Program*

Video: *Part 4 An Overview of the Program*

Video: *Well Women's screening video (Breast screening and Pap smears)*

Flip Charts: *Strong Women, Strong Babies, Strong Culture*
Infant Feeding Guidelines
Women's Business
Alcohol and Other Drugs Can Affect Your Baby

Healthy Pregnancy Healthy Baby Handbook

Core of Life

Appendix 3

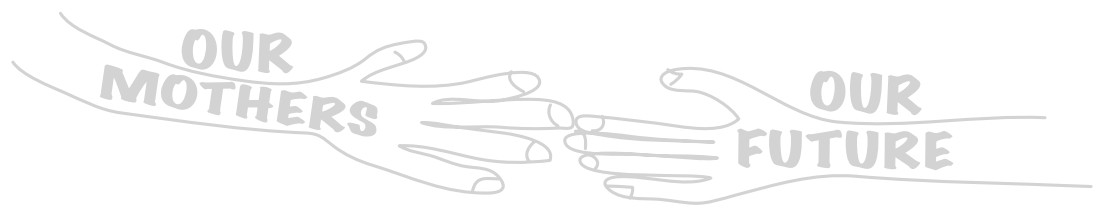
Critical Conditions for Program

These conditions must be met for a community to commence the program and for the program to be sustainable in current communities.

Be well informed and have an understanding of the SWSBSC program including aims and objectives, enablers and barriers and nature of the work of the SWW.

The following attributes would be considered

- Knowledge of the core business of the program
- Level of community support and ownership of the program and support of Strong Women Workers
- Community members understanding of the program
- Suitable Aboriginal women from the proposed community are identified, have community support to work in the position and are willing to fulfil the role.
- One full time Strong Women Worker employed per 1000 of community population.
- The women identified as future Strong Women Workers should belong to different skin or clan groups in order that the program can reach all women in the community.
- The women identified as future Strong Women Workers should have access to outstation populations both culturally and in a practical sense such as transport for regular visits.
- Community to provide safe and supported environment
- Community consultation process undertaken prior to commencement of program and support from community members to commence the program
- DHF is able to provide financial and management support to new employees in the identified community
- Health Centre staff have undergone education regarding the program and are supportive of the Strong Women Workers community based role in the community.



Education opportunities include:

- Strong Women Workers to provide education to new staff in the health centre regarding the program and their role
 - Strong Women Coordinators to attend remote health orientation to present the program to staff
 - Strong Women Coordinators and Workers to provide education to existing health centre staff to ensure a good understanding of the program.
-
- Strong Women Workers are supported to provide their core business to the community and do not work outside of this unless by negotiation.
 - Suitable Accommodation for visiting support staff ie SW Coordinators
 - Adherence to the DHF Aboriginal Cultural Security Policy (see Appendix 4)
 - Orientation program for SWW including a clear duty statement and job description.
 - Professional development of SWWs
 - Clearly defined line management of SWWs

Appendix 4

Aboriginal Cultural Security Policy - Cultural Security Policy Statement

The Northern Territory is a place of great cultural diversity. This is one of our greatest social and economic resources and is integral to the image we present to the world. Given this diversity, it is essential that Government services can meet the needs of all Territorians.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are almost one third of our population. They also have the greatest health and welfare needs of any group of Territorians. It is important that the Department of Health and Community Services (DHCS) delivers services in a way that is both effective for Aboriginal people and that protects and respects their cultural rights and values.

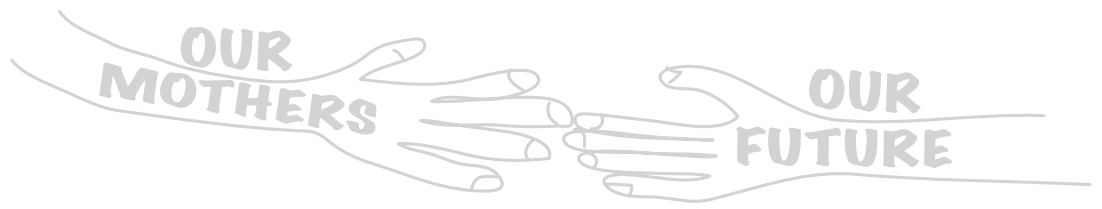
Cultural Security is a commitment that the services offered to Aboriginal Territorians by the Department of Health and Community Services will respectfully combine the cultural rights and values of Aboriginal people with the best that health and community service systems have to offer.

Providing culturally secure services requires health and community service providers to:

- *Identify* those elements of Aboriginal culture that affect the delivery of health and community services in the Northern Territory
- *Review* service delivery practices to ensure that they do not unnecessarily offend Aboriginal people's culture and values
- *Act* to modify service delivery practices where necessary
- *Monitor* service activity to ensure that our services continue to meet culturally safe standards.

Providing culturally secure services is a way that we can ensure that all Territorians have access to safe and effective services.

This statement is an extract from the Department of Health and Families, Aboriginal Cultural Security Policy: An outline of the Policy and its Implementation. If you would like to see the policy booklet please ask the Health Centre Staff. They are able to access it through the DHF Intranet site or request for a copy to be sent to them.



Expression of Interest for Program Commencement

Community:

Contact Name(s):

Telephone Numbers:

After reading the Information Booklet please answer the following questions to assist us in understanding your community's needs and your ability to support the Strong Women, Strong Baby, Strong Culture Program

1. How do you see the SWSBSC program being of benefit to your community?

2. Please outline any special needs you feel your community may have?

3. Discuss the resources your community has available in order to support the Strong Women Workers and their ongoing work (reread Appendix 3; do you have a vehicle available; is there a space from which they can work etc)



4. Have you identified any possible Strong Women Workers?

We, the undersigned, acknowledge that we have read and understood the SWSBSC Information Booklet. We also acknowledge that this Expression of Interest has been written following consultation with all relevant parties including Council and Health Centre representatives (see list of key stake holders on page 4).

Signature(s):

Date:

