



**Engaging Vulnerable Women in
Physical Activity – the market you
may be missing**

Womens Health Services

Womens Health Services

- Located in Northbridge
- Medical service with women doctors and nurses for women's health issues
- Mental Health Services: counselling, perinatal mental health program, support program for women who are parenting and experiencing a chronic mental health problem

Womens Health Services

- Aboriginal Grandparents and Family Support Services
- AOD Services: Counselling and other support services for both women and their families
- Domestic Violence Services including a sexual assault service
- Services for children and young people
- Community Development

Who do we work with?

WHS works with women with:

- chronic mental health problems,
- women with problematic alcohol and other drug use issues,
- women involved with Corrective Services,
- women experiencing domestic violence,
- newly arrived migrant and refugee women
- older migrant and refugee women and
- Aboriginal women

Physical activity opportunities WHS offers

- Learning new skills or rediscovering old ones: swimming for beginner swimmers and learn to ride a bike
- Mastery of new skills: social cycling group for new riders or riders who want to improve their confidence
- Physical activity opportunities: classes and come and try sessions including Zumba, Tai Chi, Pilates, gentle exercise, etc

Physical activity opportunities WHS offers

- Brokerage – women and their families can participate in activities of their choice
- Family based activities: picnics with games, walks, swimming, activities at family camps
- Different women and their families enjoy different activities

Access is the Issue!

- 79.1% How to get work, qualifications leading to work
- 75.4% Information on women's health
- 66.4% Exercise classes for women
- 59.7% Eating better on a budget
- WHS Needs Assessment of the Services Requested by Newly Arrived Women to WA

Commonalities amongst these groups

- The women accessing the activities are quite diverse
- However, there are many commonalities in running successful physical activity and nutrition sessions with these women



What works.....

- Asking women what activities they would like to participate in
- Making activities family based so children are allowed to join in (if it's safe)
- Venues where women feel safe
- Keeping activities low cost

Centrelink Payments

- Single woman on Newstart the payment is \$462.80 per fortnight
- Single woman with 1 child under 5 will get \$780.56 per fortnight
- Pension payment for a single women is \$644.20 per fortnight

Cost of Exercising

Cost of Swimming (10 pack price concession) \$35.10

- Cost of Gym (10 pack price concession) \$144
- Cost of Group Fitness Class (10 pack price concession) \$144
- Child Care per child (some centres offer a 10 pass which would be slightly cheaper) \$4.70 per 1.5 hours

What works

- Not expecting huge numbers
- Giving time for classes to get established (there may be other things going on for participants)
- Having permission to try something and it failing – learning from our mistakes
- Skill based classes and then the opportunity to master these skills (learn to ride a bike and then social bike riding)

What works

- Gender segregated activities as well as mixed gender activities
- Intimate partner violence was the leading cause of poor health in the 15-44 years age above smoking, cardiovascular disease
 - Vic Health in 2004

Dealing with Racism and Discrimination

- Barrier to physical activity and recreation especially for those who are visibly different
- Dealing with racism and discrimination by staff and other recreation users
- Letting people feel safe 1st

What are your experiences?

What hasn't been so successful

- Walking groups – safety & violence are concerns, cultural considerations
- Week day classes – Evenings, Saturdays and Sundays are more popular (exception is older participants)
- Working with very newly arrived women (especially refugee women)
- Short term contracts

What are your experiences?

Markets you may not have considered!

- Swimming lessons for post primary students
 - New arrivals every day into this state & other students who for various reasons have missed out
 - 36 585 permanent additions to WA through immigration in 2008-2009
 - 23 985 students in WA in 2008 -2009
 - 22 950 long stay visitors/ workers in 2008-2009

Markets you may not have considered!

- Learn to swim for adults
- Women then going into Aqua Aerobics classes, swim squads or just bringing their families in for a swim!
- Make it affordable to learn & then you have a long term market

Markets you may not have considered!

- Older women – for a variety of physical activities
- Ageing population who will be encouraged to keep active

Markets you may not have considered!

- Family based activities.
- Some of the most requested activities by our clients
- Opportunities for parents and children to do activities together
- Time pressure, single parents
- Weekend activities

Infrastructure Gaps

- Child Care (appropriate rooms where children can be minded)
- Swimming pools especially ones that are private or semi private for women
- Swimming pools with ramps for older participants

Infrastructure Gaps

- Learn to ride pathways: circular pathways ideal for “pocket parks” where young and those young at heart can learn to ride a bike

Infrastructure Gaps

- Lack of staff within these communities that can work in physical activity programs
- Population Health Cert I to IV is currently not running
- Cert III in Exercise and Fitness just starting to be run for these groups
- Promote Sport and Recreation traineeships Cert III & IV amongst government and NGOs

Take Home Messages

- Participation is hampered by
 - Poverty
 - Violence (especially gender violence)
 - Racism and Discrimination

- Understanding these and overcoming these will result in better participation by vulnerable women and their families

We are looking for partnerships to help women and their families participate in physical activity and recreation!

- Researchers – collect and analyze data
- Local Councils, recreation centres and NGOs – to work together to give women access to local programs
- Local council network of physical activity and healthy lifestyle programs



Comments or questions?



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