



Research Directions

Office of Research Services

Reframing Responses to Sexual Abuse Trauma

Associate Professor Louise O'Brien from the School of Nursing has received funding for research into sexual abuse from the Mental Health Coordinating Council. Professor O'Brien aims to enhance the capacity of non-government organisations to provide services to adult victims/survivors of child sexual assault who have complex mental health and substance abuse problems.



Female adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse have been identified as a particularly vulnerable group in society. They tend to be disadvantaged by both the legacy of the sexual abuse and other associated trauma. They often need multiple support services including housing, employment, education and training, medical care, maternal and child support. This group of people can require counselling for sexual assault and drug and alcohol use as well as psychotherapy and psychiatric services.

Professor O'Brien says that: 'Organisations that provide services to women who have these complex problems need to manage the risk involved of their staff becoming overwhelmed by the traumatic stories of these women. Staff need to be pro-active in their follow-up of clients, make sure that referral systems work and that workers have sufficient education, training and supervision to be able to manage effectively'.

To continue to improve support for victims of sexual abuse, the project will develop a Continuum Safety Plan to provide practical guidelines for workers responding to victim/survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Appropriate standards, training requirements, policies and procedures for workers will be identified and the needs of those living in regional and rural areas specified. Recommendations will also be made for a statewide directory of services for ongoing development.

Project Title: *Reframing Responses*

Funding has been set at: \$11,000.

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