



Final grant report: Giving Evidence in Care Proceedings in Children’s Court DVD

Project title	Giving Evidence in Care Proceedings in Children’s Court DVD
Grant recipient	Association of Children’s Welfare Agencies (ACWA)
Project manager	Terry Georgeson
Position	Project Manager
Law and Justice Foundation awarded amount	\$32,246.00
Grant period	August 2015 – July 2016
Date of this report	25 July 2016

Description of the project

Describe the project in just enough detail so that anyone can understand it. What was the aim of the project, who was the intended audience and what strategies did you implement to achieve the aim?

The aim of the project was to improve the quality and consistency of evidence provided to the Children’s Court. The intended audience was workers and managers in non-government organisations providing Out-of-Home Care. We consulted with a range of professionals, including Children’s Court magistrates, lawyers working within the Children’s Court including FaCS legal, and managers and caseworkers in the Out-of-Home Care sector to identify areas where improved knowledge and skills were needed. One of the issues that emerged in developing training was the lack of a current resource for caseworkers and managers to observe the proceedings in a Children’s Court and the stages of giving evidence. Caseworkers and managers could contact the legal officer at their local Children’s Court for a visit, however proceedings are closed proceedings and there was no guarantee of what the visitors could observe on the day in relation to learning about giving evidence.

The project – what happened?

How did the project come about?

A DVD was identified as a resource which would allow caseworkers and managers to observe the nature of proceedings in a Children's Court and the stages of giving evidence. This could be used by individuals and in groups as a learning tool for supervision and training to improve preparation for giving evidence and giving evidence.

Due to the need to respect confidentiality of parties in the Children's Court proceedings, a scenario was identified, based on a possible case which would require a caseworker to give evidence.

The filming was done with professionals who work in the Children's Court rather than actors to assist with authenticity. The filming was conducted in a University Moot Court setting as this was preferable for filming in order to respect confidentiality of children, young people and their families.

It was also decided through discussion with various parties that placing the DVD in the context of a discussion between a caseworker and manager would promote best practice in using supervision as an opportunity for training and debriefing.

Briefly set out the project stages and what happened in each stage.

1. The project outline was completed.
2. Research and script development for the initial filming: discussion between caseworker and manager. Consultation with Legal Aid NSW regarding the script and amendments. (This was a condition of the grant).
3. Pre-production consultations with filming company and rehearsals with caseworker and manager.
4. Filming of discussion between manager and caseworker in office environment.
5. Consultations with Children's magistrate and legal representatives about the scenario and the way that the court scene would run for the day.
6. Filming of court scene.
7. Wrote facilitator's guide to accompany DVD and send to Legal Aid to be checked. Sent to Law and Justice Foundation for feedback around resources and logo to be included. Completed edits on facilitator's guide.
8. Viewed first edit of DVD, disseminated to professionals for consultation and gave feedback for further amendments, including voiceover for slides and subtitles.
9. Sent copy of first edit to Legal Aid, Law and Justice Foundation, FaCS, Children's Court magistrate and legal representatives for feedback.
10. Arranged launch event and invited Law and Justice Foundation and other relevant parties to launch event.
11. Completed final edits on DVD and send to Legal Aid and Law and Justice Foundation for feedback.
12. Sent DVD and Facilitator's Guide to publisher for copying and publishing.

13. Held launch event at NSW Parliament House; distributed some copies to attendees and collected contact details for mailing out additional copies and for evaluation.
14. Developed letter to accompany DVD, order form for DVD and posted information related to DVD on website.
15. Put DVD footage on ACWA website. (This was a condition of the grant).
16. Developed evaluation framework and evaluation forms/Survey Monkey to send out.
17. Sent out DVDs to member agencies and to those who requested DVD.
18. Sent out evaluations.
19. Collated evaluations for inclusion in report.
20. Completed and submitted Final report.

If resource materials were produced as part of the project:

How were they distributed?

- A limited number of copies of the DVD were available on the launch evening.
- Names of interested parties were also collected on a list for DVDs to be mailed out.
- A number of DVDs were also included free of charge in ACWA's "Children's Court Training Resources" Package. These were mailed out to members-one complimentary copy per member agency. Members could then order additional packages.
- A high quality file was put up on the ACWA Website under Publications for access.

What was the extent of the distribution?

- 400 copies of the DVD were produced: 200 stand-alone copies and 200 copies as part of the ACWA Children's Court Training Resources package.
- In all a total of 147 copies have been sent out as part of the ACWA Children's Court Training Resources Package and 75 copies of the DVD have been sent or given to Members and legal services working in this area.
- The footage was then put on the website; see information about views below.
- We will have further copies available at our ACWA Conference in August, and also aim to send out to major Universities with a Law Faculty.

If applicable, at the time of this report, what has been the extent of online use of your publication?

There were 42 views as at the end of May 2016 of the online copy of the DVD.

Now that the project has concluded, how did the implementation and/or the outcome differ from what was originally intended? Did anything surprise you? Were there any unintended outcomes?

The planning for the dissemination and evaluation was different to what we expected. We found it useful to follow up several times with Members and worked with our State-wide Reference Group

for our Best Practice Unit to raise awareness and to ask Members to commit to following up the resource with their staff. We also sent out reminder letters and emails to Members. We also used the resource in our training.

Evaluation

What questions did you ask to evaluate whether you had achieved your aim?

The following was used for State-wide Reference Group Members:

1. Have you accessed the resource?
2. Have you experienced any difficulties in accessing the resource?
3. Is it clear who the resource is aimed at?
4. If you have accessed the resource:
5. Who have you/do you intend on sharing the resource with (either internally or external to your agency)?
6. Have you or your colleagues used/intend to use the resource? If so, how and in what context?
7. Which part/s of the resource did you find the most helpful?
8. Were there any parts of the resource which were not applicable to your agency?
9. How well was the information pitched?
10. Are you able to comment on the impact the use of this resource has had on staff, policy or practice within your agency?
11. Do you have any other comments/feedback?

The following was used for training participants:

1. Where have you watched the DVD?
2. How would you describe your knowledge of giving evidence in care proceedings in Children's Court prior to watching the DVD?
3. How would you describe your knowledge of giving evidence in care proceedings in Children's Court after watching the DVD?
4. How would you describe your confidence in giving evidence in care proceedings in Children's Court prior to watching the DVD?
5. How would you describe your confidence in giving evidence in care proceedings in Children's Court after watching the DVD?
6. What will change in how you present evidence in care proceedings in Children's Court in the future?
7. Is there any additional information or training that would assist you further in giving evidence in care proceedings in Children's Court in the future?

Did you achieve your aim? What did you find out?

Overwhelmingly the feedback is that we produced a practical, relevant resource for the NGO sector. Participants overall indicated an increased knowledge and confidence and that they felt confident in speaking with their supervisor and FaCS legal representative prior to going to Court.

Conclusion and recommendations

What is your conclusion?

The DVD has been a helpful resource to Managers and workers in the Out-of-Home Care non-government sector.

What are your recommendations for improvements both for the intended audience of your project, and for the strategy you used to achieve your aim? What would you do differently next time?

To date we have not had many suggestions for improvement. The only suggestion has been to maybe interview and show footage of workers who have given evidence about what went well and what didn't go so well, which is a possible consideration for the future.