Our Mission

Immigrant Women’s Health Service is committed to empowering women and valuing their life experiences.

We work with compassion, unity and mutual respect.

Main Objectives:

- To provide a service that caters for the developmental needs of CALD immigrant and refugee women
- To continue to develop and maintain health education programs that will foster healthy attitudes, habits and behaviours
- To organise health campaigns and provide information on a broad range of topics in culturally appropriate forms
- To continue to document the health and developmental needs of women in the local area
- To involve women in consultations and self-identification of their developmental needs.
- To foster community development with a view to enable local women to develop informal support mechanisms

Services provided

The program incorporates a holistic approach that is characterized by the promotion of health, both mental and physical, to women participating in the various programs.

Immigrant Women’s Health Service (IWHS) provides the following services:

- Health education and support programs
- Health information services
- Counselling and referral
- Social and Support groups
- Various campaigns to lobby and advocate for women’s rights and well-being
- Outreach clinical and legal services
- English language and Computer classes
Philosophy & Funding

Immigrant Women’s Health Service is a community based women’s service, committed to providing a range of high quality information, referral and advocacy services for immigrant and refugee women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD).

Immigrant Women’s Health Service is a non-government and not for profit service receiving the majority of its funding from NSW Health through Sydney South West Area Health Service – NGO grant program.

Other funding sources that are project based and are time limited include:

- Family And Community Services Indigenous Affairs (FACSIA) through the Smith Family funding the Multicultural Parenting project.
- Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care (DADHC) funding the Middle Eastern Senior Women’s group.
- Office for Women
- Fairfield City council
- Cancer council

Snapshot of services

IWHS has provided migrant and refugee women from CALD communities with a range of health education sessions, programs, courses, projects, information and referral and many more services to address their health needs and build their capacity. IWHS has promoted the physical, emotional and psychological well-being of women through making new friends in a new land, sharing of skills, and access to knowledge and experiences in a safe and supportive environment. The service has delivered a number of partnership programs for women from different ethnic communities such as Vietnamese, Cambodian, Cantonese, Arabic Speaking, Assyrian, Chaldean, Spanish Speaking, Swahili, Sudanese, Somali, Mandanian, Turkish, Chinese and Filipino, and there was a significant participation of women in all programs as outlined below.

Migrant and refugee women have significantly benefited both directly and indirectly from participating in the range of opportunities made available to them at both centres (Fairfield and Cabramatta). On a weekly basis, women have gained knowledge and confidence from health talks and information sessions of mainstream service providers. Also, they had overcome their isolation and improved their emotional and psychological well-being through talking, sharing stories, access to counselling and free legal advice, learning new skills and making new friends in a safe and supportive environment. In the long-term, they are building their strength and confidence throughout the
settlement process where integrating into the wider Australian community is more feasible and positive.

In addition there have been significant projects that IWHS have initiated and participated in, in collaboration with a range of government and non-government organisations, in particular the Multicultural Parenting Project and Steps to Employment Programs with the Smith Family and funded by the Department of Families, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs, the group work and counselling with STARTTS, Transcultural Mental Health and Fairfield counselling Team, as well as the diverse projects with Fairfield City Council.

**AT A GLANCE:**

- 12,201 were the total number of women who attended weekly group programs (occasions of service).
- 220 women attend English classes every week
- 151 parenting programs for the multicultural communities were conducted which was attended by 5,210 participants (occasions of service).
- Over 325 information sessions were conducted
- 17 groups were established to address the needs of nine CALD communities
- 12 New partnerships were established
- Childminding was provided to 1698 children
- 1353 women received incidental counselling
- 452 women received free legal advice
- 7531 phone referrals were addressed

**SOME HIGHLIGHTS:**

- 74 women attended diabetes education program
- 8 refugee women received TAFE scholarship
- 351 women registered in various groups
- 22 Sudanese women are now working as Child Care workers
- 21 Somali and Iraqi women trained for Australian citizenship test and received it
- 25 African women joined the catering project
- 18 Vietnamese women completed their hairdressing courses and are working in the industry
• 19 women who had experienced domestic violence secured accommodation permanently through the lobbying of the organisation
• Women from 11 different nationalities are now working as bilingual community workers with various health agencies and the AEC.
• 19 families were able to travel overseas to visit their families after the budgeting course they attended at the service
• 98 families noted a significant improvement in their relationship with their children following the Arabic Assyrian Parenting project. The project successful outcome was noted by the community which encouraged the funding body to enlarge the scope of service provision to include more communities in other areas such as old Guildford, Villawood and Carramar. The project approved title will be, Multicultural Parent Project, MPP.
• 22 older women from the seniors group indicated an improvement in their health and well-being from attending the support group
• 31 Iraqi women and 22 Asian women indicated an improvement to their health and in managing their stress levels as a result of participating in the yoga groups
• 41 Assyrian women survived through extreme domestic violence experiences.
• 33 Arabic speaking women were able to attend the Family Court and advocate for their rights independently.
• 32 Turkish speaking women developed a market project where they were able to sell their hand craft products
• 20 Cambodian women bought a stall at the local markets to sell their flower arrangements which is recently available on the internet as well.
• 31 volunteers entered the workforce after training at the service and acquiring a reference with local experience.
• 17 new Parenting Group were established
• 29 Vietnamese women joined a make-up course/ certificate 2

Client demographics

The major users of the service were migrant and refugee women and children from CALD communities in the Fairfield Local Government Area. There was an average of 560 women who attended weekly group sessions with a total of 12,201 occasions of services in group programs.

The majority were Cambodian, Vietnamese and Cantonese speakers, Arabic Speaking, Assyrian, Chaldean ,Mandanian, Sudanese, Laos, Tagalog, Turkish, Spanish, Serbian, Romanian from Fairfield, Cabramatta, Bonnyrigg, Canley Vale, Canley Heights, St Johns Parks, Auburn, Lidcombe, Bankstown, Preston ,Telopea, Westmead, Berala, Seven Hill, Macquarie Field, and Moorebank and other surrounding suburbs.
Most of the women are aged between 25 and 70 with poor or little English, lack knowledge and understanding of mainstream services and approximately 85% had or are experiencing family violence and hardship. 68% of clients are single women and are predominantly unemployed or work casual or part-time.

**Health Education & support programs**

IWHS initiated a range of programs aiming to facilitate community development initiatives and support mechanisms for women accessing the service. Women regularly attend the group meetings and have come to forge strong bonds of friendship and rapport that developed as a result of the informal support structure within the groups. The women’s health education program has evoked the participation of over 9000 women in its various group activities. With over 23 groups, and women from 22 different backgrounds attending them, IWHS is growing from strength to strength.

The following women’s groups meet at each centre on weekly bases and during the school term:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Name</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic Women's Support Group</td>
<td>1510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assyrian Women's Group</td>
<td>980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese Women's group</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandanian Women's Support group</td>
<td>561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern Senior Women’s groups</td>
<td>556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV support groups</td>
<td>519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s enterprise</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish Women’s Group</td>
<td>598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbian Women’s support group</td>
<td>458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swahili Women’s group</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish Women’s group</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodian Women’s support group</td>
<td>882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish Healthy Awareness group</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Older Women’s group</td>
<td>1,496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese Women's Health group</td>
<td>1,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese Working Women support group</td>
<td>459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English classes (5 groups)</td>
<td>4,893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga classes (2 groups)</td>
<td>2,512</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer classes (beginners and advance)</td>
<td>830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Unity</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino Women’s support group</td>
<td>340</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
NEW GROUPS ESTABLISHED:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somalian Women’s Group</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African women Playgroup</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic Women’s Carers’ Support Group</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khmer Parent Support group</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

English Language Classes

The English classes have always aimed at helping CALD women overcome the barriers in settlement through acquiring good English skills in conversation and literacy skills. The classes provide access to learning English in a safe and relaxed environment with the help of the friendly teaching staff, who in turn are dedicated volunteers. Five classes, spanning over three days per week, are currently held at IWHS Fairfield and Cabramatta. The classes range from beginner level to advance.

These 7 on-going English classes are aiming to provide CALD women with an opportunity to acquire language skills in a less formal and friendly environment that is free from academic pressure and suitable for their age. The classes enable them to gain English language needed for their everyday living.

Child minding:

The provision of free child minding is an integral part of the services offered at both centres (Fairfield and Cabramatta) and also outreach service provided, which puts into practice our access and equity principles in offering all women the opportunity to participate in the range of programs, projects and activities available at the service. Childminding is offered five days a week during school terms. The total number of children who accessed childminding is 2680 (occasions of service, 1980 at Fairfield and 610 at Cabramatta).

Health Information Services

At IWHS, programs and activities are delivered with the aim of empowering women across all determinants of health—physical, mental, socio-economic and cultural. These determinants often overlap to shape our health information sessions and activities. Over 288 sessions for more than 22 groups were organized for the women attending the weekly group sessions covering the following topics:

- Quality Use of Medicines (14 sessions)
- Healthy Bones- Falls Prevention, Osteoporosis, Back Care (14 sessions)
- Dental Care (8 sessions)
- Healthy Eating –Nutrition, Importance of exercise, food
| Physical Well-being | safety (26 sessions)  
|---------------------|-----------------------|
|                     | - Gentle exercise sessions & Tai Chi (19 sessions)  
|                     | - Women’s sexual health - visit to the health nurse, Pap tests, menopause information (19 sessions)  
|                     | - Chronic diseases’ information-Diabetes, Heart Disease, Breast Cancer, Stroke, Incontinence(19 sessions)  
|                     | - Deafness (20 sessions)  
|                     | - Sleep disorders (13 sessions)  
|                     | - HIV Awareness and Prevention (18 sessions)  
|                     | - Pain Management (20 Sessions)  
|                     | - Hep C Awareness and Prevention (13 sessions)  
|                     | - Hep B and Liver cancer (15 sessions)  
|                     | - Mind your memory (11 sessions)  
|                     | - Palliative care (13 sessions)  
|                     | - Diabetes Awareness (16 sessions)  
|                     | - Stroke Awareness (12 sessions)  
|                     | - Obesity (14 sessions)  
|                     | - Arthritis & Osteoporosis (17 sessions)  
|                     | - Bladder control (15 sessions)  
|                     | - Eye care (13 sessions)  
|                     | - Food for brain (17 session)  
|                     | - Bowel cancer (17 sessions)  
|                     | - Dementia awareness (15 sessions)  
|                     | - Healthy eating for older people (15 sessions)  
|                     | - Stress management (16 programs)  

| Mental/Psychological Well-being | Memory and Dementia (16 sessions)  
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                                 | - Depression (17 sessions)  
|                                 | - Self Esteem (18 sessions)  
|                                 | - Stress and Anxiety (16 sessions)  
|                                 | - Isolation and Adjusting to a new culture (14 sessions)  
|                                 | - Issues of Identity, ways of relating to others (16 sessions)  
|                                 | - Respite care (16 sessions)  
|                                 | - Positive thinking (14 sessions)  
|                                 | - Body image (16 sessions)  
|                                 | - Mind your own mind (15 sessions)  
|                                 | - Positive thinking (13 sessions)  
|                                 | - Positive Aging (14 sessions)  
|                                 | - Healthy relationship (16 programs)  

| Socio-Economic Well-being | Tenant Connect Program (17 sessions)  
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|                           | - Council roles and responsibilities  
|                           | - Sustainable living (18 sessions)  
|                           | - Quarantine matters and regulations (14 sessions)  

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime prevention Pension update (14 sessions)</th>
<th>Recreational/Craft</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Age Care Package (15 sessions)</td>
<td>Outings/excursion (17 trips)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waste Management (17 sessions)</td>
<td>Cooking (8 sessions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarantine information for travellers (15 sessions)</td>
<td>Craft sessions- Greeting card making, decorative tissue box covers, crocheting, knitting, jewellery making, sewing, Christmas decoration (56 Sessions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Money management session (17 sessions)</td>
<td>Aqua Aerobics (13sessions)</td>
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<td>Personal safety on the street (15 sessions)</td>
<td>Basket weaving (13 sessions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prolonged effects of DV (15 sessions)</td>
<td>Arts/Crafts/Crocheting (41 occasions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will, Estates and Power of Attorney (20 sessions)</td>
<td>Cooking demonstration (17 sessions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal safety at home and when travelling</td>
<td>Outings/excursions (54 trips)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home and Community Care (6 sessions)</td>
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<td>Discrimination: Awareness and support services (5 sessions)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Family well-being</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicating with children (17 sessions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting (20 sessions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contraception (15 sessions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dealing with Gambling (17 sessions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dealing with Drugs Contraceptive health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children play time and activities (44 occasions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese/Vietnamese New Year celebration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior week celebration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Refugee week celebration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multicultural Health Week celebration</td>
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<tr>
<td>culture celebration (20 occasions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other vital topics</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------</td>
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| Other Programs                         | Sustainable Living Project, CRC (17 weeks) |
|                                       | Female Genital Mutilation Program in partnership with the Cumberland Hospital |
|                                       | In partnership with SSWAHS for the BCE programs: |
|                                       | 'Women Growing Older' (15 programs - 19 weeks each) |
|                                       | 'Women & Children Growing together in a New Country' (6 weeks) |
|                                       | 'Living with Choices' (16 weeks) |
|                                       | 'New Healthy Women' (18 weeks) |
|                                       | 'Living Well in the Middle Years' (12 weeks) |
|                                       | Health nutrition program (16 sessions) |
|                                       | Environmental Education: Energy saving Fire safety education (19 sessions) |

**Counselling & Referral**

In partnership with the Service for the Trauma and Torture Rehabilitation Service (STARTTS) and Transcultural Mental Health (TMH), and Fairfield Counselling Team, group and individual counselling is offered on a weekly basis. On average STARTTS runs the weekly counselling group and provides counselling to 18 individual clients. TMH provides counselling to 9 clients per week and IWHS staff provides accidental counselling to 29 clients per week.

The main presenting issues in counselling include: domestic violence, relationships, settlement issues, migration, grief and loss, family separation, Raising children in different country, physiological abuse, family dispute and mental health issues in general.

IWHS staff generally receives 98 personal referrals and 119 phone referrals per week. Referrals and information is provided particularly in relation to Housing & accommodation, Centrelink, charity organisations for emergency relief, settlement related information, women carer and workforce dispute and homelessness inquiries.

IWHS Facilitators of all programs attended carefully to women’s problems and referred them to appropriate services where they would get professional assistance. Generally, the problems encountered were housing and accommodation issues, Centrelink benefits, family relationship, family violence and household bills. On a weekly basis, project staff referred an average of 24 women to mainstream services and received 54 personal referrals, 75 phone referrals, and 87 general enquiries.
Lobbying & Advocacy

IWHS is active in lobbying and advocating for CALD women by taking part in discussions and events related to women issues including family violence, community development (Fairfield City Town planning), and other celebrations such as International Women’s Day, White Ribbon day, and Refugee Week. Women were also advocated for any concerns they might have individually by making a phone call, helping with enquiry, reading and filling forms where required.

IWHS facilitated a range of opportunities for women to participate in campaigns to raise awareness of women’s issues, struggles and achievements; these included; International Women’s Day, Senior’s Week celebration, Refugee week, White Ribbon, Community Care for Domestic Violence, 16 days of action against violence, the Feminist conference and Equal Pay campaign. The political education project in partnership with AEC will be running till 2011 election date. It is an empowering initiative as migrant and refugee women became vocal participants and visible representatives in their communities.

The service is also quite active in local interagencies and networks such as Fairfield Immigrant and Refugee Women Network which has been hosted at IWHS premises over the last 4 years and a staff representative is a co-convenor of the network. The Manager has also been on the Premiere Council for Domestic Violence (DV) as an advisory member on DV issues in particular for the CALD communities. The Plan of Action had been released by government where Minster for Women requested from the manger to reman in the advisory council through the implementation process.

In addition the Manager was requested by the Chairperson of the Community Relations Commission to remain as a member in the Regional Committee for Liverpool and Macarthur areas, representing local community needs for another term.

Individual lobbying and advocacy work in relation to individual client needs takes place on a daily basis particularly with access to services and systems. IWHS works from a holistic model to health care which takes the woman and her life circumstances into account whilst providing a supportive and safe environment.

Local and Ethnic media were used to promote health information sessions and events to all CALD women in the wider community.
Outreach Clinical and Legal Services

An on-going Women’s Health clinic is run in partnership with Bankstown Health Service which provides check ups, referral and other related health issues such as breast check, pap smears, continence assessments, advice on pregnancy and pregnancy tests, a check after the baby is born, menopause, and contraception, etc. The clinic was held 15 times and provided services to 49 women from CALD communities, and most of them lived in south-west Sydney. Appointments were arranged on a fortnightly basis and TIS phone interpreters were used for most consultations.

IWHS is committed to increasing women’s capacity through providing support, information and guidance to empower women to make well informed decisions about their bodies and their lives.

IWHS is strongly committed to the philosophy that women have the right to live free from violence, injustice, inequality and discrimination. IWHS has a continuing and valuable relationship with Women’s Legal Services NSW. This partnership has been very effective in empowering women, as clients are being informed of their legal rights, responsibilities and the services available to them. Women’s Legal Services NSW provides free face to face legal advice on a fortnightly basis at IWHS, Fairfield for over 10 years. The solicitor attending the outreach clinic will see approximately 8 women per session and is always completely booked. This outreach clinic had been a very successful tool in informing disadvantaged women of their legal rights in various areas of the law, including family law, domestic violence and discrimination. IWHS and Women’s Legal Services NSW are dedicated to empowering women by providing legal information, legal advice, representation and referral. There have been numerous testimonials from women regarding this service. The clients believe the solicitors from the outreach clinic are professional, friendly and have empathy.

There are several benefits in having a legal outreach clinic at a women's health centre, particularly since the partnership allows the two services to make internal referrals to other services available.

**Multicultural Parenting project** funded by FACSIA through a Smith Family initiative, Community for Children, C4C. This aimed to develop a culture appropriate parenting model especially for Multicultural communities in Fairfield and surrounded suburbs as indicated by the funding guideline. The project was funded for three years and there will be another extended year due to the continuing demands from the community. The project developed an education program which has been delivered to both communities throughout Fairfield LGA with a primary focus on children’s personalities. In total 74 programs were conducted and each program was attended by 20-25 participants, amounting to 16,575 occasions of service.
Partnerships Strengthened & Established

IWHS strongly believes in partnership to achieve its goals in meeting the needs of migrant and refugee women through coming together with a diverse range of services with specialist skills and resources who share similar passion and goals. Our sincere appreciation goes to the following organizations who continue to make our wish list and the dreams and aspirations of many women a reality.

- Play Group Australia
- Miller TAFE Outreach
- Granville TAFE
- House of Welcome
- Multicultural Respite Network
- Bankstown Health Service
- Health Promotion Service for Older People
- Fairfield City Council
- Fairfield and Liverpool Police
- Women’s Legal service NSW
- Cancer Council of NSW
- Cabramatta Police
- Service for the Trauma & Torture Service
- Cambodian Australian Welfare Council (CAWC)
- Asian Women At Work
- The Smith Family
- Philippine Australian Community Services Incorporated (PACSI)
- Fairfield Multicultural Health Service
- NSW Transcultural Mental Health Centre
- BCE program, South West Sydney Area Health Service
- Vietnamese Women Association
- Sydney Community College
- Women’s Health NSW
- Seniors Peer Education
- Liverpool City Council
- Fairfield Hospital
- Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre
- Cabramatta community Centre
- Community First Step
- Multicultural Family Planning
- Medicine Information and Peer Support
Multicultural Respite Network
MTC Fairfield and Liverpool
Centre link Fairfield, Cabramatta and Liverpool

Management, Staff & Volunteers

Immigrant Women’s Health Service is a not for profit women’s health service. It is an incorporated association overseen by a board of Management with 20 staff, most of whom are part-time and sessional workers.

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT:

Audrey Lai  Chairperson
Svetlana Maric  Secretary
Dalila Peredo  Treasurer
Anh Thu Tran  Member
Janet Stevens  Member
Nada Damcevska  Member

STAFF:

Manager
Admin (part-time) x2
Cabramatta Project Co-ordinator
Women’s Health Educators, 2
Cabramatta Administration Assistant
Group Facilitators: Arabic, Vietnamese, Chinese, Swahili, Middle Eastern
Seniors women, Chinese, Sudanese, Spanish, Somali
Book-keeper
Child Minders
Multicultural Parenting Project (MPP) 5 facilitators

The service also has a committed group of 27 volunteers. Their prime duty was to assist group facilitators and some general office support. On-the-job training was provided to support the volunteers.

VOLUNTEERS:

Seham Tallal  Yesim Sevine
Kathy Woods  Helen Arabzadah
Nola Younes  Hong Nguyen
Carole Cole  Berri Al Gilani
Anhe Le  Birgul Tavli
Quality Improvement

The manager participated in a 1 day training session with QMS around the Self Assessment Quality Improvement Program. Our service continues to operate based on principles of quality management and continuous quality improvement, but lack of funds and staff time prohibit us from seeking formal external validation or undertaking a formal program of accreditation.

Immigrant Women’s Health Service holds annual planning and review days with the board of Management and staff to evaluate our services and programs, review our strategic plan and identify gaps in services and clients needs.

Pre and post surveys are conducted with all groups and programs to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs and the impact they had on improving women’s health and well-being. These surveys ascertain changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.

Organisational Details

Fairfield Centre
92 Smart Street,
Fairfield 2165
Tel: 9726 4044
Fax: 9726 4928
Operating times: 9am – 5pm,
Monday – Friday

Cabramatta Centre
McBurney Road,
Cabramatta 2166
Tel: 9726 1016
Fax: 9728 7312
Operating times: 9.00am – 2.30pm,
Monday - Friday

iwhs@swsahs.nsw.gov.au
www.immigrantwomenshealth.org.au

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