Step by Step family support

The Step by Step program is a family support program provided by YFS and funded by the Department of Social Services. Its purpose is to build the capacity of families to adequately nurture, protect and keep their children safe by providing prevention and early intervention services. It supports vulnerable families in the Logan area with case management for up to 12 months and has a counselling service that clients can access as needed.

Program evaluation

The 2019 evaluation by Griffith University focused on the impact of the program on children and families and the factors that predict positive outcomes. The evaluation drew on:

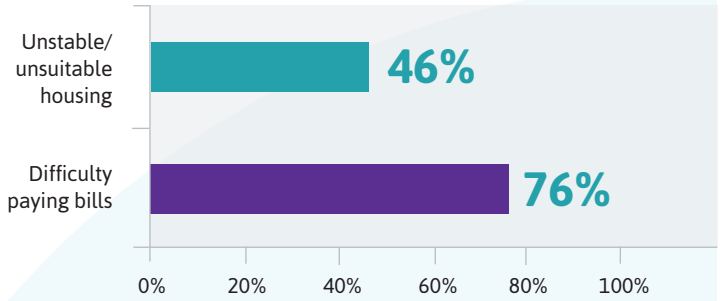
- **program data about Step by Step clients who entered or exited the program during 2018**
- **in-depth interviews with staff and a sample of clients.**

Multiple and complex needs of families

- **poverty and unemployment**
- **poor physical and mental health**
- **domestic and family violence**
- **alcohol and drug use**
- **social isolation**
- **contact with the child protection and criminal justice systems.**

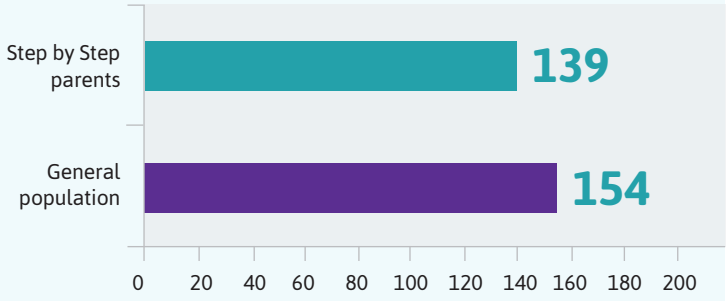
In particular, housing and financial resources were significant areas of need, with almost half living in unsuitable housing, and three quarters having difficulty paying electricity, gas, or telephone bills.

Proportion of clients presenting with housing and financial difficulties



Many parents entering the Step by Step program also experienced difficulties with parenting and managing children's behavior. On average, they had significantly lower total parental empowerment scores than the general population, indicating a substantial level of need (based on self-assessed Parent Empowerment and Efficacy Measure - PEEM scores).[1]

Comparative parental scores



[1]The PEEM is a validated and reliable measure of parental empowerment and self-assessed efficacy that measures parents' "sense of control or capacity to engage confidently with the challenges of being a parent". See: https://www.realwell.org.au/peem/

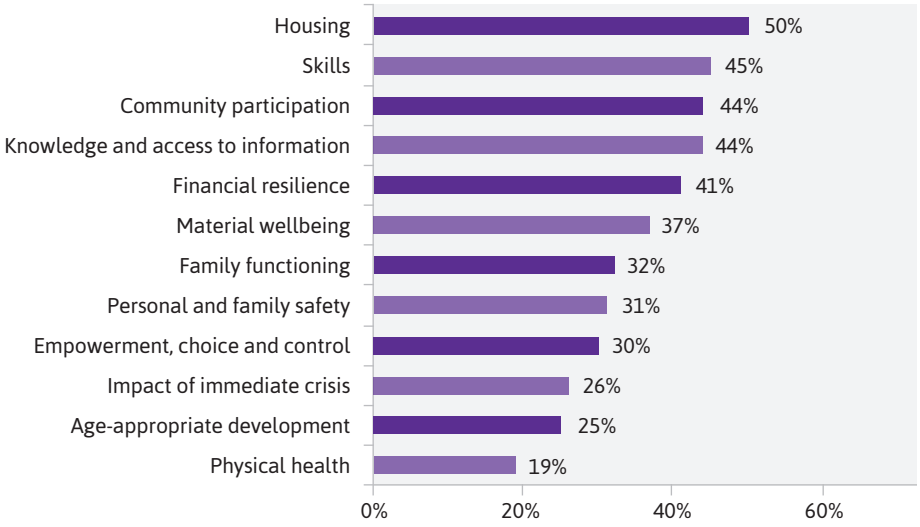
Client Outcomes

Step by Step measures outcomes using the Standard Client Outcome Reporting (SCORE) tool.

The average aggregate SCORE changed from 32.8 on entry to 42.9 on exit, representing a significant improvement of 31% (p<.001).

The greatest improvement was observed in relation to housing, skills, community participation and networks, knowledge and access to information, and financial resilience.

Improvements in client outcomes



Clients who completed case plan goals, who had planned exits, and who had longer service durations had significantly better outcomes.

Client feedback

Clients appreciated the support provided by Step by Step and described feeling happier, hopeful, resilient, and more capable to deal with challenges.

> "They have a wide variety of things they're able to work with."

> "I liked the fact that we had one support worker that stuck with us."

> "I'm happier, I'm more positive."

Key strengths of the Step by Step program

- a clear purpose and theory of change reflected in practice
- the voluntary nature of the program, aiding trust and rapport building
- the ability to provide a range of supports, addressing immediate needs and longer term goals
- an emphasis on building capacity
- complementary counselling and case management components
- the strong team and work environment
- having an identified Indigenous Case Manager.

Challenges and future considerations

Three key needs were identified as being especially challenging for the service to meet: housing, accessing NDIS, and managing risk of harm.

Housing was identified as a substantial area of need. While Step by Step is capable of providing housing support, it is not a specialist housing service and should remain focused on providing support across a range of life domains to enable families to achieve independence and participation.

Demonstrating eligibility and applying for NDIS funding can be complex, time consuming and expensive. The program should explore opportunities to fund specialist assessments to support NDIS applications.

Overtime, Step by Step has catered to families with higher needs than initially intended. While the program has a demonstrated capacity to hold high risk and complex cases, it should consider strategies for maintaining its intended focus on prevention and early intervention.

For more information contact communications@yfs.org.au

Copyright © 2019 YFS Ltd. | ABN 58 239 250 649 | ACN 167 122 527 | AS/NZS ISO 9001/14001 YFS is funded by the Australian Government and the Queensland Government.