



MONASH University

Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences

Supervising for interdisciplinary collaboration and social justice in a community legal service

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Legal Service (MOLs)



Introduction

- The Monash 4 Faculty Partnership – history
- Co location of MOLs and FLAP
- 2 learning models = 2 supervision models
- Pedagogical outcomes
- Client outcomes





A new vision for field education

- 2009 was a year of review in the Department of Social Work with the development of a new vision and priorities for Field Education
- Develop field education into a core scholarly priority within the Department
- Strengthen and develop new and innovative partnerships

OUR Social Work Field Education VISION

“Integrated, cutting edge, creative, state of the art program producing critically reflective practitioners”

History

- Law Faculty approached department of social work to discuss the possibility of establishing a multidisciplinary clinic (MDC) at Monash Oakleigh Legal Service (MOLS)
- The clinic was to include law, social work, business/economics (Consumer advocacy), and interpreting students to work together in the clinic. 4 Faculty in total.



Monash-Oakleigh Legal Service (MOLS)

- Is a partnership between Monash Law School and Victoria Legal Aid.
- Through the service, members of the community can obtain free legal advice on a variety of legal matters.
- A student run service where students are supervised by solicitors employed by Monash Law School and volunteers from the legal industry.



Co location

Monash Oakleigh Legal Service

Generalist Legal Clinic

- Advice
- Letters
- Negotiations with other parties
- Preparation of legal/financial documents
- Legal proceedings
- Arranging representation in court/tribunals

Family Law Assistance Program

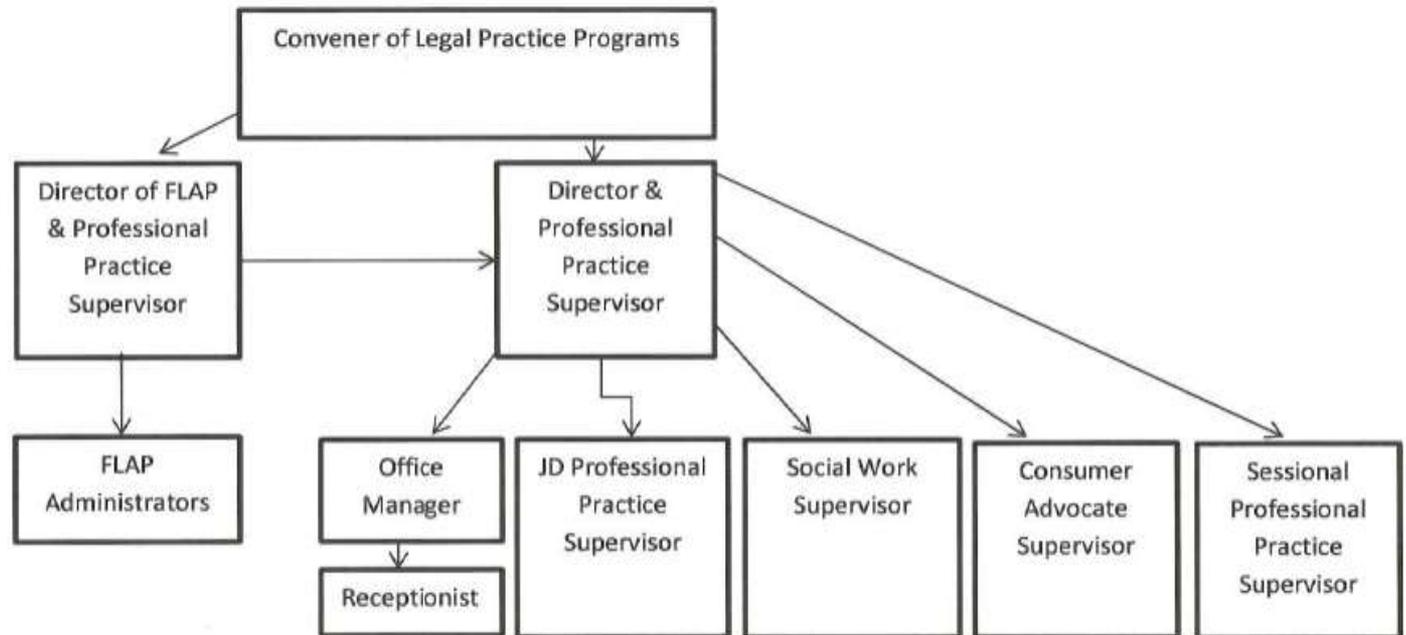
- Divorce
- Child residency
- Property
- Child support



The Family Law Assistance Program (FLAP)

- A self-help clinical legal service = assist people involved in Family Law litigation who do not have legal representation.
- Administered by Monash University and funded by the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department.
- Information on-
 - family law procedure
 - mediation and other forms of dispute resolution
 - the impact family breakdown can have on those involved.
- Documentation is drafted on behalf of clients for litigation.
- Clients are assisted by students.
- All students are supervised by qualified lawyers.

Organisational Chart at Monash Oakleigh Legal Service and Family Law Assistance Program





Underlying principles

- Accessible legal advice
- Delivery of legal services to the disadvantaged
- Self-help is encouraged
- Strong commitment to the community
- Values of freedom of choice, respect, equality, dignity and social justice underpin service provision
- These values fit well with social work values.



Social Work Role

- We began with 2 groups of 4 social work students in this first year.
- The first group of 4 spent 6 weeks with their supervisor exploring what would be the role of social work in the MDC
- The outcome was that **social work would offer a short term, crisis intervention and referral service.**

- 6 weeks into the practicum the first group of social work students were assigned to a team in the MDC located in MOLs. At the same time consumer advocate students also began work in the clinics and were assigned to a team. This model continues today.

Growth into the FLAP program

- As the role and reputation of social work grew law students working in the FLAP unit began to seek out the social work students and their supervisor for assistance with their client work.
- Social work students now work in both the MDC clinics and the FLAP clinics when allocated to this field education program
- Two placement cycles occur each year with 10 social work students in each cycle



Social work involvement in Clinics each day of the week (2014)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning	Court	MDC Clinic		FLAP Clinic	FLAP Clinic
Afternoon	MDC Clinic	FLAP Clinic	FLAP Clinic	MDC Clinic	

MDC Clinic = Multidisciplinary Clinic located in the Monash Oakleigh Legal Service

FLAP Clinic = Located in the Family Law Assistance Program

Supervision

- A social work supervisor works across the two co-located services supervising up to 10 social work students
- The social work supervisor is appointed each year from June to December
- Supervision includes
 - For social work students
 - Team supervision in the multi disciplinary clinics, during clinic times and during file review
 - Group supervision with the social work students at a team meeting once a fortnight
 - Individual supervision of both a formal and informal nature
 - Consultation with law, finance, interpreting students and their supervisors

Learning environment

Students

- Direct practice
- Team work
- Organisational culture
- Community development and networking with local resources
- Court work
- Report writing
- Project work
- Ethical discussions

Supervisors

- Team multi disciplinary supervision
- Ethical discussions
- Acknowledgement of different areas of expertise
- Learning and designing the program as we go
- Joint supervision a must during clinic hours



Social Work Students

- Students provide
 - bio psychosocial assessments
 - Warm referrals to other organisations
 - Court reports
 - Assistance to clients in the areas of
 - Mental health
 - Drug and alcohol
 - Relationship issues
 - Neighbourhood disputes
 - Domestic violence
- Social work student projects
 - a comparison of legal and social work ethics
 - formulating a needs analysis of the Family Law Programme
 - an orientation manual for incoming students
 - community education activities
 - Literature reviews of particular areas of practice



PEDAGOGICAL OUTCOMES

- Understanding the broader nature of their future work
- Teamwork, teamwork, teamwork!!!!
- Comprehending the work of other disciplines and the benefits they offer
- Empowering to both student and client
- Developing holistic *solutions*



Pedagogical Outcomes

‘The experience at MOLS has reinforced the importance of team work and responsibility. These are valuable in any work setting. Effective team work and responsibility are central to good practice for social work. It also emphasised the importance of supervision in social work. Being that we have undertaken a placement in a legal service where social work is on the periphery, it has been important for me as a student to have a senior source of support and guidance (i.e Social Work Supervisor) when tackling unfamiliar ground. As students we lack knowledge and experience however, through supervision, we are given insight and awareness of how we carry out our work, the importance of the work we do for clients and the challenges we face and continue to face in our future practice.’



Pedagogical Outcome

‘When I was interviewing a client with a law student the client was talking about being a victim of domestic violence. The law student focussed on the presenting legal matter, but I was able to offer the client some counselling, referral and a safety plan.’

Pedagogical outcome

‘I have learnt that legal practitioners and social work practitioners can have overlapping objectives in regards to working for the maximum benefit of clients. Although each profession is based on differing philosophical foundations, both can have the similar goal of working for the empowerment of the disadvantaged and vulnerable people of society. Furthermore, there are many legal issues that evolve either directly or indirectly from entrenched social and economic disadvantage, mental illness, or some other form of oppression. In terms of addressing these deeper forces, I have learnt that the combined efforts of law and social work practitioners will multiply and transcend the capabilities of either profession working in isolation. A whole-of-person approach to client’s problems involves the collaboration of professionals of various backgrounds and expertise.’

Pedagogical Outcomes

‘Hearing the Supervisors’ different perspectives on a client’s problem – taking into account that each discipline has something unique to offer. You develop an understanding of what each discipline can offer based on the advice suggested during MDC sessions.’

Pedagogical outcomes

‘I’ve learnt how exactly social workers help clients with legal problems and that there might be an underlying issue which has resulted in them having a legal problem.....and to analyse and be critical of clients stories as they do not always tell the truth. (Think a bit like a lawyer)’

Outcomes for clients

- Holistic solutions to legal problems
- Sentencing that takes into account social circumstances
- Prevention
 - Sentencing
 - Re offending
- Referral to other services



Client Outcomes

‘The MDCs are extremely effective in responding to the complex and multifaceted needs of clients. MDCs provide a three-dimensional, comprehensive service that fully investigates and explores every aspect of a client’s situation. In this way, not only are the immediate and short-term needs of clients addressed more fully, but the long-term, intractable, and oftentimes hidden problems at hand might be untangled, explored, and ameliorated’

Client outcomes

‘Having access to the Supervisors collective knowledge and experience, means that our clients are given more realistic and practical solutions. Working from a multi-disciplinary approach means we are in a better position to meet the diverse needs of the client, who may have a legal matter which also has social and financial implications. Overall, the client greatly benefits from having students from different faculties involved in their assessment/case’

Outcomes

- Vulnerable clients and groups
- Holistic problem solving approach
- Prevention and referral
- Research and publications
- Other opportunities for Law/Social Work collaboration
- Policy and law reform
- New opportunities for the model



References

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