

Application of community development approaches in promoting positive mental health in rural South Australia

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Based on the field work, community work experiences and reflections, the authors look at how rural communities can be engaged in the process of addressing the issue of mental health and specially in challenging the myths of stigma attached to mental health. The paper describes the methods used in developing community networks and partnerships in rural South Australia and analyses how these methods have supported in creating positive environment in the local communities to promote mental health. It also outlines some of the challenges and issues faced in the field

In nutshell, the paper examines the strengths of rural communities by exploring nature of the existing safety-net groups, and analyses the partnerships and networks that were formed during the tenure of first author's employment. This is highlighted with case examples to illustrate how the strength based partnership models have enhanced in creating a supportive environment in the communities, which supported the initiative of developing Mental Health Support Groups and Mental Health Action Group in rural South Australia. It also examines the strengths of the evolving role of communities in promoting mental health and suggests a few intervention strategies and discusses some issues in social work practice with communities.