

RESTACKING THE ODDS

RSTO IN ACTION

Improving family violence screening and support in pregnancy



RSTO in action uses hypothetical scenarios to showcase how RSTO partnerships—with services and communities—can drive meaningful change in service provision. These scenarios are informed by real challenges, opportunities and RSTO partnerships.

Each scenario illustrates how a service provider in antenatal care, parenting programs or early childhood education and care (ECEC) have used the RSTO indicators to improve their practices and optimise the benefits for children and families.

SCENARIO

RSTO's partnership with a maternity hospital helps to uncover low rates of family violence screening among pregnant women. Strategies are put in place to enhance screening rates and ensure that women experiencing family violence in pregnancy are connected to available services and supports.

Service focus:
Antenatal care

RSTO indicator focus:
Quality, quantity and participation

The community

Community A is located in the western suburbs of Melbourne. It has a large and growing number of young families, with many having relocated from other parts of Melbourne due to better housing affordability.

The challenge

Community A has just launched a local initiative that brings together multiple organisations to work together to improve the lives of children and families. The initiative is currently working to better understand current child and family outcomes and key system and service gaps. One issue identified is the high prevalence of family violence, with recorded cases increasing over the past five years. Local police have suggested that rates are especially worrying for pregnant women.

Using RSTO indicators to identify service strengths and gaps

Restacking the Odds was invited to present to the local community initiative members on how the project may support them to identify and act on issues across the service system. After a series of discussions between RSTO and community leaders, it was agreed that the RSTO indicators and Learning Action System would be used by the local hospital to better understand the provision of antenatal care: are women receiving the required amount evidence-based quality care when and where they need it? Hospital leaders recognised that RSTO indicators would provide the hospital and broader community with better visibility on the prevalence of

family violence during pregnancy (a quality indicator in the RSTO framework), and more opportunities to intervene early and refer women to appropriate services and support.

Initially, RSTO engaged closely with key personnel from the local hospital to review existing data collection and reporting strategies, systems and tools.

An RSTO data extraction tool was then incorporated into the hospital's IT system to extract the relevant de-identifiable data and calculate and visualise the indicators.

Between July and September 2022, the hospital completed its first data collection and reporting cycle of the RSTO data. While its quantity and participation metrics demonstrated strong performance relative to state and national standards, the quality metrics highlighted several performance gaps. The data showed less than 5% of pregnant women (n = 5220) were being screened for risk of family violence. This metric is significantly below state benchmarks and best practice (Figure 1).

Creating solutions to benefit women at risk of experiencing family violence in pregnancy

With support from the RSTO's Quality improvement program, hospital staff were consulted to understand why the relevant family violence data was not being collected. These consultations revealed that staff felt they were inadequately trained to broach this sensitive topic. Staff were also unsure of the actions to take if a pregnant woman was to report 'yes' to family violence during screening.



Figure 1: Percentage of pregnant women screened for family violence

Hospital staff, worked together and consulted members of the RSTO Community of Practice for ideas on how to improve the screening of pregnant women for family violence.

This work identified opportunities for targeted investment in evidence-based staff training. Provisions were made within the budget to include regular professional development sessions for practitioners to help improve recording of data and the support provided to women either at risk or experiencing family violence in pregnancy.

Between October 2022 and March 2023, the hospital completed quarterly reporting on the RSTO data and worked with the RSTO team to build staff capabilities in data literacy. Over time, the percentage of women being screened for risk of family violence improved and was close to the state benchmark. The data also uncovered that a high number of women were experiencing family violence during their pregnancy.

Reporting on the high number of women whose at risk of family violence during pregnancy helped spark an internal review into how the hospital could enhance the support provided to women, including appropriate referrals when needed. The review recommended the hospital build formal partnerships and referral agreements with local family violence services and supports. The hospital committed to implementing these recommendations in full.

Ongoing use of the Restacking framework

The hospital now routinely collects and reports on its RSTO data and presents the report to the Quality and Improvement Committee each quarter. Hospital leaders are continuing to engage with the RSTO Community of Practice to learn from others' experiences and gain insights to help enhance the training and practices of staff. They are also working with the local community initiative to ensure the hospital is effectively connected to local family violence services.



Interested in partnering with RSTO?

Learn about opportunities to engage with the project at www.rsto.org.au/partnering-with-rsto/

RESTACKING THE ODDS

RSTO is a collaboration between the Centre for Community Child Health at Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Bain & Company, and Social Ventures Australia.

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We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work and pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging.