

Dr Josy K. Thomas (MSW, MPhil, PhD)

Summary

I am a mental health specialised social worker with over 30 years' experience in the community services sector including in clinical mental health practice, statutory child protection and family violence. I have extensive knowledge of the detrimental impact of family violence, child abuse, neglect and trauma on the development of children and later in their adult life. I also have demonstrated knowledge and experience in the development of various tools that measure and evaluate programs.

Career History

- Currently working as Team Leader - Case Management within a Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Services Team at Western Health, Melbourne, providing day-to-day operational leadership and supervision to the ongoing case management team, promoting a safe, supportive and accountable team culture that values recovery-oriented and trauma-informed practice, and maintaining oversight of team caseloads to ensure safe, equitable and sustainable workload distribution.
- Previously a Specialist Family Violence Advisor at Eastern Health, Melbourne, providing expertise, education, and pathway development to improve responses to family violence within mental health services.
- Has held academic roles, including sessional lecturer at Deakin University, teaching social work research and fostering student engagement.
- Served as Child Safety Officer at the Kangan Institute in Melbourne, implementing Child Safe Standards, managing child safety incidents including reportable conduct matters and investigations, and delivering staff training in child safety.
- Held Practice Leader role at The Hume Moreland Orange Door, Melbourne, supporting practitioners in engaging children and young people impacted by family violence.
- Worked as Program Manager at BADAC, Ballarat, VIC, leading case managers in out of care (kinship) programs overseeing children subject to statutory child protection, providing strategic oversight and supporting them to deliver a range of services to a complex client base.
- Held the FaPMI Program Coordinator role at South West Healthcare, providing primary and secondary consultation to specialist mental health teams, developing policy and procedures for family inclusive practice, and community education on mental health and family support.
- Worked as Team Leader in child protection at Department of Health & Human Services in the South West Victoria, ensuring legislative compliance and high-risk case management.

- Early career in Australia as a child protection practitioner in South Australia, conducting investigations and assessments, and engaging families in ensuring safety of children by providing case management.
- Gained international experience in community healthcare and HIV prevention in India, including program planning, evaluation, and capacity building.
- Early career included psychiatric social work in India, providing clinical assessments, family therapy, and supervision.

Key Skills and Contributions

- Expertise in family violence, child safety, mental health, and trauma.
- Development of evaluation tools and program policies.
- Leadership in multidisciplinary teams, stakeholder engagement, and capacity building.
- Academic contributions through conference presentations and publications on family caregiving, mental illness, and community programs.

Educational Credentials

- PhD in Social Work (Mental Health) from Monash University.
- Master of Social Work
- MPhil in Psychiatric Social Work
- Diploma in Statutory Child Protection from the SA DFC College for Learning & Development

Papers presented in National/International Conferences

- Thomas, J. K.; Petrakis, M; Sheehan, R. **Family Caregiving Experience and Social Support in Mental Illness**, Scientific paper presented at the 70th Annual National Conference of the Indian Psychiatric Society, 5-8 Feb 2018, Ranchi, India.
- Thomas, J. K.; Basu, S; Deb, J. **Working with Families where a Parent has a Mental Illness (FaPMI)**, Symposium conducted at the 70th Annual National Conference of the Indian Psychiatric Society, 5-8 Feb 2018, Ranchi, India.
- Thomas, J. K. **It takes a Whole Community Approach to Support Families where a Parent has a Mental Illness**, Poster presented at the National Centre for Farmer Health Conference, 12 Sep 2018, Hamilton, Victoria, Australia.
- Thomas, J. K.; Hine, R. **Working with Families where a Parent has a Mental Illness (FaPMI) in the South West Victoria in Australia: A Rural Experience**, A free paper presented at the International Conference on Families experiencing Substance Use, Mental or Physical Health Problems, 14-16 May 2019, Oslo, Norway.
- Thomas, J. K.; Goodyear, M. **Development of a Tool to evaluate the FaPMI (Families where a Parent has a Mental Illness) Program in the State of Victoria in Australia**, A scientific paper presented at the International Conference on Families experiencing Substance Use, Mental or Physical Health Problems, 14-16 May 2019, Oslo, Norway.

Publications

1. Thomas, J. K.; Petrakis, M; Sheehan, R. (2018) **Family Burden and Social Support: A Comparative Study in Schizophrenia and Mood Disorders**, Indian Journal of Psychiatry, Vol.60, No.5, 85.
2. Thomas, J. K.; Deb, J; Basu, S. (2018) **Working with Families where a Parent has a Mental Illness**, Indian Journal of Psychiatry, Vol.60, No.5, 36
3. Thomas, J. K.; Suresh Kumar, P. N.; Verma, A. N.; Sinha, V. K.; Andrade, C. (2004) **Psychosocial Dysfunction and Family Burden in Schizophrenia and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder**, Indian Journal of Psychiatry, Vol.46, No.3, 238-243.
4. Pradhan, S. C.; Singh, M. M.; Singh, R. A.; Das, J.; Ram D.; Patil, B.; Jain, A. K.; Thomas, J. K. (2001) **First Care Givers of Mentally Ill Patients: A Multi-Centre Study**, Indian Journal of Medical Sciences, Vol. 55, No. 4, 203-208.
5. Thomas, J. K.; George, D.; Suresh Kumar, P. N. (2000) **Pathways to Psychiatric Care: A Kerala Experience**, Kerala Journal of Psychiatry, Vol.15, No.1, 59-67.
6. Suresh Kumar, P. N.; Thomas, J. K.; Bagchi, D. J.; Sinha, V. K.; Verma, A. N. (1998) **An Exploratory Study of Escape/Abscondence from a Psychiatric Hospital in Eastern India**, Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine, Vol.21, No.1,

Other Credentials

- Member of AASW and the Victorian Branch Management Committee (BMC)
- National Coordinator of the Australian Association of Malayalee Social Workers (AAMSW)
- Member of the Regional Advisory Council (RAC) of the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) from November 2023 to June 2026
- Member of the Board of Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council (VMIAC) from November 2019 to November 2021