

# Promoting mental health

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### Policy framework

The *Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention for Mental Health Action Plan and Monograph*<sup>26</sup> is the national strategic framework to address the promotion, prevention and early intervention priorities under the NMHS. Both documents were developed by the Mental Health Promotion and Prevention Working Group, a group jointly auspiced by the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council National Mental Health Working Group and the National Public Health Partnership.

The Action Plan draws on available evidence and describes strategies to enhance protective factors and reduce risk factors known to be associated with mental illness. For each of 15 priority groups, the Action Plan describes opportunities for promotion, prevention and early intervention.

### MindFrame National Media Initiative

The MindFrame National Media Initiative seeks to influence the media industry to report and portray mental illness and suicide issues responsibly, accurately and sensitively in all its forms — print, broadcast, film, advertising and internet. Projects include:

- Media monitoring research, which analyses media reports over a twelve month period to provide baseline information about the quality and nature of media reporting. This research is supported by literature reviews and case studies. It is soon to be repeated to determine if changes and improvements have been achieved over the past three years of the initiative.
- Resources for media professionals including print, web-based and CD resources, and face to face training for media professional. A total of 68 educational briefings to major media organisations were held during 2004 in all states and territories including regional centres. In addition a further eight briefings with media organisations were carried out in the first quarter of 2005, bringing the total to 76. Promotion of the website via an email alert to 1,488 media contacts and a promotional mail-out to a further 1,950 media contacts;
- StigmaWatch, managed by SANE Australia, a web-based program that allows members of the public to identify media they consider inaccurate or which makes discriminatory references to mental illness. Discussions are then held with the broadcaster or publisher about the matter, with a view to educating and changing future actions. Further information is at <http://www.sane.org>.
- ResponseAbility, managed by the Hunter Institute of Mental Health, provides resources for undergraduate journalism and media studies students. Further information is at <http://www.responseability.org>.

This work is guided by the National Media and Mental Health Group, composed of representatives from key media industry groups and regulatory bodies, Indigenous media, consumer representatives, and mental health and suicide prevention experts. Further information on MindFrame is available at <http://www.mindframe-media.info>.

## **MindMatters: A mental health promotion resource for secondary schools**

Schools play a central role in shaping young people's development through their curriculum, organisational culture and social environment. Entry to secondary school is accompanied by the young person's increasing need for autonomy, the onset of puberty and the increased influence of peers, all of which are critical in the developmental pathways of young people. The period is marked by increased risk exposures that may predispose young people to poor mental health outcomes. It is during their secondary schooling that some young people experience the first onset of mental health problems.

The MindMatters national initiative aims to embed promotion, prevention and early intervention activities for mental health and suicide prevention into Australian secondary schools from the government, independent and Catholic systems of education.

The various sub-initiatives have been developed as comprehensive and complementary resources that fit a whole school framework. The whole school model focuses on the ways schools can enhance protective factors for its students by: providing a mutually respectful, inclusive, safe and supportive environment, free from prejudice and discrimination; ensuring that the whole curriculum, across all subject areas, promotes health and wellbeing; and working in partnership for the wellbeing of the total school community.

Since March 2000, MindMatters has achieved an extensive roll-out to Australian secondary schools. In total, 2212 of secondary schools (or 79 per cent) have sent more than 49,000 staff for professional development. Approximately 88 per cent of these schools have indicated that they have plans to implement MindMatters or are likely to do so in the near future. The independent evaluation is showing significant uptake and impacts in key indicator areas within secondary schools. For example, some case study schools are attributing their involvement with MindMatters to improvements in retention rates, truancy, suspensions and relationships between staff and students.

The MindMatters initiative includes:

- **MindMatters**, which provides a framework for secondary schools to assist with mental health promotion and suicide prevention;
- **MindMatters Plus**, which focuses on achieving better mental health outcomes for students with high support needs;
- **MindMatters Plus GP**, which aims to create sustainable referral pathways between schools and their local Division of General Practice;
- **FamiliesMatter**, to engage parents and families to become involved in and support the work of MindMatters and MindMatters Plus; and
- **ResponseAbility**, targeted at secondary teacher university students with the aim of educating them about mental health promotion and suicide prevention, for their personal gain and as the future educators of young people.

Further information is available from the MindMatters website found at:

<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters>.

## **The Australian Network for Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention for Mental Health (Auseinet)**

Auseinet is a project to assist the implementation of mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention and suicide prevention initiatives in the mental health, health and other relevant sectors. This involves actively working with state and territory governments as well as consumer and carer and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups.

The Auseinet network consists of more than 6004 individuals and stakeholder organisations, including a network of approximately 785 consumer and carer organisations. The following work is being undertaken by Auseinet:

- developing culturally appropriate resource materials on mental health promotion for use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- in partnership with the Australian Division of General Practice (ADGP), developing education and training modules for the general practice workforce in the area of mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention;
- funding small grants projects that aim to support mental health non-government organisations, consumers, carers and the community sector to build capacity to initiate promotion, prevention and early intervention activities;
- working with state and territory government to facilitate linkages and enhance communication infrastructure to support mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention activities;
- providing input into the Public Health Education and Research Partnership project being implemented jointly by Flinders University Department of Public Health and The University of Queensland.
- promoting and coordinating the national consultations on the National Suicide Prevention Strategy national framework: *Living is for Everyone (LIFE): a framework for prevention of suicide and self-harm in Australia*, and enhancing linkages with state and territory governments around suicide prevention initiatives; and
- publish the Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health (AeJAMH), which attracts more than 22,000 hits in the month directly following the posting of a new issue, with more than 1500 downloads of the full version of each issue. AeJAHM has a subscriber list of more than 400 (nationally and internationally).

Auseinet has a comprehensive website (<http://auseinet.flinders.edu.au>) and also hosts the national suicide prevention website (<http://www.livingisforeveryone.com.au>).

## **Resilience education and drug information**

Resilience Education and Drug Information (REDI), funded under the National School Drug Education Program, is a suite of school drug education resources focusing on preventing and reducing harm from drug use by building more resilient young people, including:

- **professional development** resources for teachers and school staff, which assist them to gain an understanding of current research and practice in the area of resilience, and

consider the possible implications for school drug education strategies, health promotion and wellbeing within their own school context;

- the **Big Move (Upper Primary)** which assesses options and consequences for responding in unsafe situations, discusses how taking on different roles affects relationships, attitudes and behaviours, and analyses the ways in which people define their own and other people's identities;
- **My TV (Lower Secondary)** which explores issues of drug use, in particular alcohol, tobacco and cannabis, and addresses skills such as decision making, self-talk and being assertive, problem predicting and solving, and help-seeking behaviour;
- **On the Edge (Upper Secondary)** which focuses on the perceptions and opinions of young people towards drugs, relationships, stress, goals and self-esteem. It explores the transition from school to beyond and includes comments and opinions from a wide variety of experts; and
- the website <http://www.redi.gov.au>, which contains information on drug education, a drug dictionary and a resource list of key school drug education policies and resources available nationally.

#### **National Safe Schools Framework**

The National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) was endorsed by all state and territory ministers of education in July 2003. The NSSF includes an agreed set of guiding principles for promoting safe school environments and suggests strategies that schools can use. It emphasises the need for schools to respond proactively to incidents of victimisation or abuse, to encourage parents to identify and report incidents, to clearly document steps and outcomes for managing incidents, and to work closely with parents on the issues, especially when their children become involved in incidents, either as victims or perpetrators. Details of the framework are available at <http://www.mceetya.edu.au/whatsnew.htm>.

The Australian Government has provided a \$4.5 million package to support the implementation of the framework in all Australian schools. Legislation requires all Australian schools to implement the framework by 1 January 2006.

The development of the *Bullying No Way!* website (<http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au>) supports the NSSF and provides teachers, parents and students with strategies and resources to address bullying, harassment and violence.

#### **Values education**

In the 2005–06 budget, the Australian Government committed \$29.7 million over four years to support values education in Australian schools. A National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools has been developed that identifies the values that schools are expected to foster. These include care and compassion, doing your best, fair go, freedom, honesty and trustworthiness, integrity, respect, responsibility, understanding, tolerance and inclusion.