The Children’s Hospital at Westmead School-Link Initiative

Information Booklet

Supporting Mental Health and Intellectual/Developmental Disability
Children and adolescents with an intellectual or developmental disability often have complex health problems. Communication limitations can make it difficult for carers and professional staff to identify health problems of concern. Mental illness is also difficult to diagnose. Some interesting details:

- Children and adolescents with an intellectual disability display the same array of mental illness as those in the general population.
- Children with an intellectual disability experience mental health problems and disorders at a prevalence rate of 41% compared to 14% of school aged children and 75% of children with autism.

**Mental Health and Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities**

The NSW School-Link Initiative has been addressing mental health in schools since 1999. Local School-Link Coordinators are located in each Local Health District in NSW.

In 2009, The Children’s Hospital at Westmead (CHW) recognised the potential to further develop the existing School-Link Initiative by focusing on the specific needs of children and adolescents with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

CHW School-Link collaborates with the Department of Education and other disability services, to support the mental health of children and adolescents with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

**Current Activities**

**Consultation**

We are available to provide support and advice on relevant mental health services for children and adolescents with intellectual and developmental disabilities please contact schn-chw-schoollink@health.nsw.gov.au or call 9845 0408/9845 2005.

**Research Activities**

As there is very little research concerning the mental health of children with intellectual disabilities, part of our focus is on building evidence based resources. We are currently engaged in assisting the Westmead Feelings Program for adolescents and an English version of a self report wellbeing measure for adolescents with intellectual disability.
CHW School-Link Resources

Webinar Series
We are partnering with the Network Specialist Facilitator Strathfield and The Benevolent Society (TBS) to host free on-demand webinars for schools to support the mental health of students with an intellectual disability. Topics are being added throughout the year. Current topics available include;

- Curiosity, collaboration and action: understanding and responding to behaviour in the classroom
- Cool, calm, collected in the classroom: supporting students with self-regulation
- The mental health of young people with intellectual disability: what you need to know and what you can do

[webinar series link]

Journal
An informative free online journal called The Journal of Mental Health for Children and Adolescents with Intellectual and Developmental Disability: An Educational Resource is available at [journal link]

The MHCAIDD journal has been running for 10 years with all previous editions stored on [journal link] For editorial enquiries and contributions please contact Hebah: hebah.saleh@health.nsw.gov.au

Website
Our website [school link] collects information and resources on intellectual and developmental disability and mental health for children and adolescents. For a list of School-Link Coordinator contacts across NSW visit [NSW mental health website]

E-list
Please join the CHW School-Link e-list at [school link] to receive the journal and other important announcements. We send out an update in between journal editions.

Textbook
In 2011, Mental Health of Children and Adolescents with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: A Framework for Professional Practice was released. The book is a composition of articles edited by Dr David Dossetor, Donna White and Lesley Whatson which spans across professions working with this population in a collaborative way.

Supporting the mental health of children and adolescents with intellectual and developmental disabilities
Mental Health Promotion and Intervention programs for children with IDD

**Westmead Feelings Program**
*Age: 8-12 and 12+ yr olds, Aim: Emotions, self regulations and problem solving*
*Target: parents, teachers and children*
*Children: ASD and mild ID. ASD without ID*
*Website: [https://www.acer.org/au/westmead-feelings-program](https://www.acer.org/au/westmead-feelings-program)*

**Stepping Stones Triple P**
*Age: 3-12 yr olds, Aim: Positive Parenting*
*Target: Parents*
*Children: disabilities and disruptive behaviour*
*Authors: Roberts et al, 2006, University of Queensland Australia*
*Website: [www.triplep-steppingstones.net](http://www.triplep-steppingstones.net)*

**The Alert Program**
*Age: 8-12 yr olds, Aim: Arousal Regulation*
*Target: Children*
*Children: Sensory processing and/or learning impairment*
*Authors: Williams and Shellenberger, 1996, USA*
*Website: [www.alertprogram.com](http://www.alertprogram.com)*

**PEERS social skills training**
*Age: 12-24 yr olds, Aim: Social Skills*
*Target: children*
*Children: Autism*
*Authors: Laugeson, 2014, UCLA*
*Website: [www.semel.ucla.edu/peers](http://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers)*

**Mental Health promotion for people with learning disabilities**
*Age: 16+ yr olds, Aim: Emotions, mental health awareness*
*Target: Young people/adults*
*Children: Intellectual disability*
*Authors: Hardy, Woodward, Halls & Creet, 2009, Estia Centre UK*

**Secret Agent Society**
*Age: 8-12 yr olds, Aim: Emotions, self regulations and problem solving*
*Target: Parents, teachers and children*
*Children: High functioning ASD*
*Authors: Beaumont, 2008. Social Skills training institute QLD*
*Website: [www.sst-institute.net](http://www.sst-institute.net)*

**Friends for Life (ID) and Special Friends (UK)**
*Age: 4+ and 9-13 yr olds, Aim: Emotions, self regulations and problem solving*
**Meet Jessica**

**Meet Jessica Awareness Resource**

In 2016, CHW School-Link developed an information package for schools to raise awareness about the mental health of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This includes a ready to go PowerPoint presentation and short animated film for professional development purposes.

Visit [www.schoollink.chw.edu.au/workshop-resources](http://www.schoollink.chw.edu.au/workshop-resources) for more information

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**Other resources:**

**Intellectual Disability Behaviour Support Program (UNSW)**

[https://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/research/intellectual-disability-behaviour-support-program/](https://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/research/intellectual-disability-behaviour-support-program/)

This contains several guidelines for behaviour support of children with an intellectual disability.

**Department of Developmental Disability Neuropsychiatry (3DN) UNSW**

[https://3dn.unsw.edu.au](https://3dn.unsw.edu.au)

This website hosts several guidelines and online professional development modules on the topic of mental health and intellectual disability.

**Agency for Clinical Innovation Resources**


There is a specific document outlining pathways to care called: “Guidelines on the Pathways to Care for children and adolescents with intellectual disability and challenging behaviour and/or mental health problems”
Finding the right mental health care for children and adolescents with intellectual or developmental disability can be confusing.

The standard referral pathway that health recommends looks like this. The family should visit their GP and discuss their mental health or behaviour concerns. The GP may then decide to refer to community services, private services or a pediatrician for further assessment, who may further refer on.

Every child with complex needs should have a paediatrician.

Mental health support needs of people with mild intellectual disability can often be met within mainstream mental health services. People with communication deficits, more severe intellectual disability and comorbid health problems often require a more specialised approach. (Department of Developmental Disability Neuropsychiatry, 2014).

Disability services may have skills useful for a child with particular behaviour or emotional problems. Behaviour support can be purchased or accessed through an NDIS plan.

If the mental health issue is serious and acute, access the emergency department of your local hospital.

Behaviours of concern include; Defiance, throwing, sensitive to change, not concentrating, hitting, kicking, spitting, restlessness, risk taking, dissociation, flashbacks, fearful, unhappy, obsessive, crying, loss of memory, loss of energy, coordination problems, incontinent, feel controlled, preoccupied with sensations, running away, self-injury, eating inappropriate items, hate self, hate others, repetitive behaviour, hyperactive, hallucinations, losing pleasure, not concentrating.
**Assessment Tools**

Helpful measures for school counsellors and psychologists working with children and adolescents with mental health issues and an intellectual or developmental disability.

**Developmental Behaviour Checklist 2**
To describe emotional and behavioural problems; designed specifically for children and adults with intellectual and/or developmental disability.
*Age:* 4-18 years for parent and teacher forms, 18 years and up for adult forms
*Format:* online
*Link:* [www.monash.edu/medicine/scs/psychiatry/research/developmental/clinical-research/dbc/about](http://www.monash.edu/medicine/scs/psychiatry/research/developmental/clinical-research/dbc/about)

**Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)**
The SDQ is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire about children and young people completed by teachers or parents. This tool has been shown by Emerson (2005) to be effective for children with Intellectual disability. It exists in several versions to meet the needs of researchers, clinicians and educationalists.
*Age:* 2-17
*Format:* paper. You can download from their website listed below in several languages
*Link:* [www.sdqinfo.org/](http://www.sdqinfo.org/)

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**Important Contacts**

**School – Link Contacts**
For contact information of School-Link coordinators across Local Health Districts in NSW, visit the NSW Health website [https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/Pages/camhs.aspx](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/Pages/camhs.aspx)

**Mental Health Line**
In an emergency, please call **000** or go to a hospital emergency department, where they may refer you to a mental health and/or drug and alcohol service.

_Mental Health - 24 hour contact._ The Mental Health Line is a 24-hour telephone service operating seven days a week across NSW. 1800 011 511

**Child Protection Helpline** 132 111 or 133 627 (mandatory reporters).

**Health Direct**
Health Direct Australia is a 24 hour telephone health advice line staffed by Registered Nurses to provide expert health advice. 1800 022 222

**National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)**
1800 800 110
[enquiries@ndis.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@ndis.gov.au)

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Contact Us

The Team

Jodie Caruana
School-Link Coordinator
Social Worker
jodie.caruana@health.nsw.gov.au

Hebah Saleh
School-Link Officer
Psychologist
hebah.saleh@health.nsw.gov.au

Kim Eisler
School-Link Officer
Psychologist
kim.eisler@health.nsw.gov.au

Phone
02 9845 0408 or 9845 2005
Email
SCHN-CHW-schoollink@health.nsw.gov.au
Website
www.schoollink.chw.edu.au

Supported by Dr David Dossetor,
Psychiatrist with an Interest in Children
and Young people with an Intellectual or
Developmental Disability.

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in Children and Young people.
@CHWSchoollink

All images used in this booklet
are created by kids for the
Operation Art project.