

**MEDIA RELEASE**

Effective Monday 14 April 2008

Better outcomes for Australian children who have parents with a mental illness**Better outcomes for children for Australian children who have parents with a mental illness**

21-23% of Australian children live in families where at least one parent has or has had a mental illness.

Although many people parent very well despite their own mental health problems, children of parents with a mental illness, as a group, are at increased risk of experiencing poor social and emotional well-being. Children in this situation are often relied upon to be their parent's primary carer and many children's lives are affected by the stigma associated with their parent's illness.

It is important that these children understand that they are not alone and that support is available to allow them to maintain and enjoy the childhood, educational and social opportunities that their peers experience.

The Adelaide-based Australian Infant, Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association (AICAFMHA) has been funded by the Australian Government's Department of Health and Ageing to expand and extend its work on the national COPMI (Children Of Parents with a Mental Illness) initiative.

The Hon. Kate Ellis MP Federal Minister for Youth, Minister for Sport, and Federal member for Adelaide will officially open the new AICAFMHA-COPMI offices on Monday April 14 at 11.30am on the ground floor of the Norwich Centre, 77 King William Road, North Adelaide.

"It has been estimated that 40-60% of children whose parent has a mental illness are at greater risk than their peers of experiencing mental health problems, equating to ½ million Australian children. The COPMI initiative is targeting health, care and education professionals nationally, to reduce this level of impact", Mr Phil Robinson, Chair of the AICAFMHA Board, said today.

The children of parents with a mental illness have been described as "hidden" or "invisible", due to the stigma associated with mental illness, the lack of awareness on the part of health professionals of their needs and the misplaced fear (on the part of both parents and children) that if they ask for help the child will be removed from the parents' care.

"One of the COPMI initiative's objectives is the development of improved training programs for mental health workers to aid in the early identification of children and families at risk. Support strategies can then be put in place for families." Ms Elizabeth Fudge, Manager of the COPMI initiative said today.

"COPMI will actively seek out relevant quality evidence in relation to its work, including expert opinion and will partner with parents with mental health problems, their carers and children to ensure that the initiative's outcomes are meaningful, relevant and supportive of those most in need." Ms Elizabeth Fudge said.

The COPMI initiative will also work to promote better mental health outcomes for children of parents with a mental health problem or disorder through increasing the availability of information for workers and families about:

- the promotion of factors to enhance children's resilience
- the reduction of risk factors for children, and
- resources to assist children and families

in relation to parental mental illness.

For media comment:

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For photographic/interview purposes:

Monday April 14 2008, 11.30 am, ground floor Norwich Centre, 77 King William Road NORTH ADELAIDE

More information on the national COPMI initiative is available at www.copmi.net.au

Authorised by David Boots, Communications Officer, COPMI Ph: (08) 83670888.