





# Background

**P**revention and early intervention in the field of Mental Health is a relatively new and exciting area of research which promises improved service delivery and outcomes for families affected by mental health problems.

The Central Coast Mental Health Service established a prevention team in 1998 to develop prevention initiatives for families and their dependent children. The team has focused on developing both universal and indicated prevention interventions which address the needs of families on the Central Coast.

Children whose parents are experiencing a mental health problem have been identified as a group at increased risk of developing mental health problems (CCAHS Prevention Project Report, 1999). In response to the findings of the prevention report, it was decided to develop a Resource Kit with information for workers, families and children.

The Resource Kit is designed to support workers and families around issues relating to the effects of mental illness on parenting, the needs of children, child protection issues and promoting positive mental health in families.

The information in this kit has been developed and adapted from a variety of sources which have been acknowledged in the references. The Central Coast Mental Health Service Prevention Project Report 1999 contains clear directions for the development of material in this kit and was especially helpful in ensuring that the concerns of families affected by mental health problems have been addressed.



**Models have been used in all artwork.**

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# Acknowledgments

The preparation of this resource kit has only been possible with the support and input from many individuals and services throughout Australia dedicated to improving outcomes for families and their children and young people. It would not be possible to acknowledge all of these people, however I would like to make special mention of the following resources, reports and programs that provided valuable information and ideas for the factsheets.

- ◆ “Keeping Kidz in Mind”: Rosemary Curtis and Wendy Fromhold
- ◆ Association of Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill (A.R.A.F.M.I.)
- ◆ Families and Mental Illness: Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Child, Adolescent and Family Counselling Service
- ◆ Gaining Ground Project: South Western Sydney Area Health Service
- ◆ Helping Children Whose Parents Have a Mental Illness/Health Problem: Melissa Davis for Mid Western Area Mental Health Services
- ◆ NSW Network: Supporting Children in Families Affected by Mental Health Problems
- ◆ Parental Mental Illness Policy Advice and Practice Guidelines for Protective Workers: Victorian Government Department of Human Services
- ◆ Peer Support for Children of Parents with Mental Illness – program design & evaluation: Rosemary Cuff & Jonathaon Pietsch
- ◆ T.R.E.E.S. Playgroup: Sue Bratchell & Helen Park
- ◆ Triple P Positive Parenting Program
- ◆ Woraninta Kit (Burnside, Macarthur Family Centre)



# Contents

The factsheets and resources contained in this kit are designed for use in the context of a family intervention. Materials should be used to promote discussion within families in consultation with an informed worker. Factsheets may be photocopied and distributed.

Sections 1,2 and 3 are suitable for workers, although some factsheets may be provided to families at the discretion of the worker.

Section 4 contains factsheets for families.

## Section One:

### Information For People Working With Parents Experiencing Mental Illness and Their Dependent Children

1. Parenting and Mental Illness
2. Common Issues For Children and Young People
3. Difficulties Which May Face Some Children and Young People
4. Children's Feelings
5. Lessons Learned From Adults Who Grew Up With a Parent Experiencing Mental Illness
6. Concerns of Parents Who Have Experienced Mental Illness
7. Parents' Ideas About What Would Be Helpful For Their Children and Young People
8. 'Keeping Kidz in Mind': Practice Guidelines

## Section Two:

### Parenting and Child Development

1. Tasks of Parenting and Stages of Development
2. Possible Effects of Mental Illness on Parenting
3. Supporting and Enhancing Children's Development
4. Child Development Children 0-5 Years
5. Child Development Children 6-12 Years
6. Child Development Young People 13-18 Years
7. Tips For Helping Children 0-5 Years
8. Tips For Helping Children 6-12 Years
9. Tips For Helping Young People 13-18 Years

# Section Three:

## Child Protection

1. Child Protection and Mental Illness
2. EnAct
3. How Might Mental Illness Increase Risk To a Child?
4. Minimising Risks To Children
5. Principles Informing Risk Assessment of Impact of Mental Illness on Parenting
6. Assessment Guidelines: Families, Parenting and Mental Illness

# Section Four:

## Information For Parents and Carers

1. A Few Facts About Mental Illness
2. Parenting
3. Mental Illness and Parenting
4. Helping Your Children
5. Child Development
6. Tips on What May Be Helpful for Children and Young People
7. "Getting In Early" Developing An Action Plan
8. Resources for Children and Young People



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