



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
between
NSW Department of Education and Training

NSW HEALTH  and
NSW Health

in relation to the **NSW School-Link Initiative**

Mental Health and Education Working Together

Signatures:

Trevor Fletcher Date *19.12.08*
Trevor Fletcher
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1. Foreword

School-Link is a collaborative Initiative between NSW Health and the Department of Education and Training to improve the mental health of children and young people in NSW. It is a key activity under the State Plan Priority F3 "Improved outcomes in Mental Health" (Appendix 1 - background details).

School-Link has three main areas of focus:

- *Assisting in strengthening formal and informal links* at local and area level between TAFE Institutes and colleges, schools, school and TAFE counsellors and Area Health Service Mental Health Services for children, adolescents and young people
- *Training programs for mental health workers and school and TAFE counsellors* to enhance skills in the recognition, intervention planning, treatment, support and prevention of mental health problems in children and young people
- *Supporting the implementation of programs* in schools for the prevention of or early intervention in mental health problems, such as Adolescents Coping with Emotions, Resourceful Adolescents Program and MindMatters.

1.1 Purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding

This Memorandum of Understanding provides a framework, without intending to create legally enforceable relations between the parties, for a collaborative approach by the NSW Department of Education and Training and NSW Health in improving the mental health of children and young people in NSW.

The framework will facilitate the interaction between NSW Health and the NSW Department of Education and Training on:

- the roles and responsibilities of the two Departments in meeting the mental health needs of children and young people in NSW government schools
- issues relevant to the management of children and young people with mental health problems and the provision of shared care and collaborative support to students with mental health problems
- the provision of ongoing joint training in the assessment and management of identified mental health problems for school and TAFE counsellors and mental health staff.
- the process for identification and development of new School-Link Initiatives
- promoting information sharing about each Department's programs, services and other resources, to facilitate better outcomes for children and young people coping with mental health problems
- shared care and collaborative support of students with a mental health problem
- specifying joint funding arrangements
- the development and delivery of mental health prevention, promotion and early intervention programs for children, adolescents and young people.

1.1.1 Schedules

The processes relevant to specific activities under this Memorandum of Understanding will be specified in the relevant Schedules.

- The addition, amendment and deletion of Schedules will be as agreed to (in writing) by the Deputy Directors General (or nominated delegates) of the two agencies.
- The duration of a Schedule will be determined by the Deputy Directors General (or nominated delegates) and will be specified in the Schedules.

1.2 Statewide Policy

The NSW School-Link Initiative is identified in or has relevance to the following NSW policy documents:-

A New Direction for NSW: State Plan

- *Priority F3: Improved Outcomes in Mental Health*
- *Priority S4: Increasing Levels of Attainment for All Students*

NSW: A new direction for Mental Health (2006) as a key priority under:

- Strategic Direction 1 (Make prevention everybody's business)
- Strategic Direction 2 (Create better experiences for people using health services).

New South Wales Interagency Action Plan for Better Mental Health (2005)

- Strategic Direction 1 (*getting in early: prevention and early intervention*)
 - 1.1 Building resilience and coping skills of children, young people and families
 - 1.2 Improving awareness of mental health issues and capacity to respond to mental health problems
 - 1.3 Intervening early in the onset of mental illness)
- Strategic Direction 2 (*breaking the cycle: community support services*)
 - 2.4 Improve participation and performance in education by children and young people with, or affected by mental illness.

New South Wales Aboriginal Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy 2006 – 2010

- Strategy One: Partnerships – Strong Working Relationships

NSW Community Mental Health Strategy (2007-2011): From Prevention & Early Intervention

NSW Department of Education and Training Student Welfare Policy

NSW Department of Education and Training 15 – 19 Yr old Strategy

- Goal 2: Supporting Strongly- strengthen and coordinate support structures and programs to maintain the learning and engagement of students considered to be at risk of leaving school early.

2. Guiding principles

The following principles guide this Memorandum of Understanding.

- NSW Health and NSW Department of Education and Training will work together to progress the NSW School-Link Initiative, making all reasonable effort to achieve the best mental health outcomes for children and young people.
- Children and young people will be encouraged to participate, consistent with their age and development, in their case management.
- Children and young people will receive appropriate support and services that assist in meeting their mental health needs.
- The importance of family relationships and social connections in growth and development and their impact on mental health will be acknowledged. With this family focus, children, adolescents, young people, families and other carers are encouraged to participate in care, planning, evaluation and quality improvement processes.

3. Target group

The Memorandum of Understanding relates to the co-provision by NSW Health and the Department of Education and Training of support to improve the mental health of children and young people attending government schools and TAFE in NSW.

4. Collaboration between NSW Health and NSW Department of Education and Training

4.1 General

4.1.1 *Implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding*

The Memorandum of Understanding will be implemented at a state and regional level, and at school and Area Health Service level using agreed communication, monitoring and review processes.

4.1.2 *Appointment of a management committee*

A management committee will be appointed by the Deputy Director General, Schools, NSW Department of Education and Training and the Deputy Director General, Strategic Development, NSW Health, to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding.

4.1.3 *Information on services and programs*

NSW Health and NSW Department of Education and Training will share information on the services, training and programs offered by each Department, including training attendance data and any evaluation outcomes.

4.1.4 *Research and data collection*

NSW Health and NSW Department of Education and Training will provide 'in principle' support to a request from either Department for joint collaboration on national or state-based research projects. Any support provided will be from within existing resources and funding. Analysis of material collected from either

agency will be shared with the other agency (or other agencies where appropriate) and inform ongoing development of resources.

4.1.5 Promotion of School-Link

Both agencies will promote the NSW School-Link Initiative and the role of the Area Health School-Link Co-ordinators through relevant professional learning and appropriate referral practices.

4.2 Information sharing

Information will be shared between NSW Health and NSW Department of Education and Training as needed in accordance with the requirements of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act (1998)*, the *Health Records And Information Privacy Act (2002)*, *Child Protection Interagency Guidelines* and the respective departmental policies and guidelines and the *Privacy Code of Practice (General) 2003*.

5. Governance Structure and roles for the NSW School-Link Initiative

5.1 NSW School-Link Management Committee

A NSW School-Link Management Committee will be established comprising senior officers from NSW Health MH-Kids and NSW Department of Education and Training Student Welfare Directorate. This committee will lead the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding, setting the strategic directions, developing and overseeing the schedules and activities and the management of the NSW School-Link Initiative. Liaison with other individuals, groups or agencies will occur from time to time as required (appendix 2 terms of reference).

5.2 NSW School-Link Working Party

The NSW School-Link Working Party of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Subcommittee (Mental Health Program Council) includes representation from all Area Mental Health Services, the Department of Education and Training and other stakeholders as required. The Working Party will assist in the implementation of the School-Link Initiative and provide advice to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Subcommittee of NSW Health. MH-Kids will facilitate exchange of information between the School-Link Working Party, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Subcommittee and the School-Link Management Committee.

5.3 Local Management

Area Directors of Mental Health and Regional Directors (or their nominees) from the NSW Department of Education and Training will be responsible for establishing and maintaining local arrangements for the implementation of agreed activities (refer to Schedules).

5.4 Local direction

Local direction in School-Link matters will be provided by Area Health School-Link Steering Committees which will include Area Health School-Link Coordinators,

district guidance officers, NSW Department of Education and Training regional personnel, other representatives from Area Mental Health Services and non government school representatives.

These local committees will also actively promote the roles of the School-Link Coordinators in facilitating shared care of students with mental health problems. These Area Health School-Link Steering Committees will report regularly to the NSW School-Link Management Committee.

6. Roles and responsibilities

This Memorandum of Understanding acknowledges that **NSW Health** currently provides, and will endeavour to provide in future, for:

1. School-Link Coordinators in each Area Health Service
2. funding support for the development of training materials
3. support for NSW Health mental health staff to access School-Link training
4. joint activities related to the implementation of this Memorandum of Understanding, including participation of Area mental health staff on local committees

This Memorandum of Understanding acknowledges that **NSW Department of Education and Training** currently provides, and will endeavour to provide in future, for:

1. release of school counsellors to participate in training on the School-Link modules
2. identification of a suitably qualified officer to support the development of the training materials
3. joint activities related to the implementation of this Memorandum of Understanding, including participation of departmental staff on local committees.

7. Implementation

This Memorandum of Understanding will be activated once it is signed by both parties and will be implemented by the two Departments. The procedures for implementation will be determined by the NSW School-Link Management Committee.

8. Dispute resolution

Any dispute about the responsibility of either NSW Health or NSW Department of Education and Training in relation to a service delivery requirement must be attempted to be resolved at the local level. If either party is unable to resolve the matter or the matter escalates, the grievance procedures of the agency raising the concern should be used to address the concern.

9. Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

9.1 Monitoring and reporting

The Memorandum of Understanding's effectiveness will be monitored by the NSW School-Link Management Committee through both agencies' lines of responsibility.

9.2 Altering this Memorandum of Understanding

Either party may seek variation of this Memorandum of Understanding by notifying the other in writing. Variations must be agreed by the Deputy Directors General (or their delegates) of both Departments who are responsible for the Memorandum of Understanding.

9.3 Evaluation

The implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding will be reviewed after two years with a process agreed to by both Departments.

10. Glossary

Children	5 – 11 year olds
Case meetings	Meetings held to facilitate information sharing, case planning, case review, decision making and interagency coordination. The specific purpose of a meeting will depend on the particular type of plan or action required.
NSW Department of Education and Training	In this context, this refers to principals, school education directors, institute managers (TAFE) or other officers as delegated by the Director-General of Education and Training.
NSW Health	In this context, this refers to officers, managers of NSW Health
Young person/adolescent	12-18 year olds

11. Supporting documents and references

- Additional information on Departmental policies, programs and services is available from the websites of the NSW Department of Education and Training, www.det.nsw.edu.au and NSW Health, www.health.nsw.gov.au
- New South Wales Interagency Action Plan for Better Mental Health (2005)
- NSW: A new direction for Mental Health 2006
- *New South Wales Aboriginal Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy 2006 – 2010*
- NSW Community Mental Health Strategy: From Prevention & early Intervention to recovery 2007-2012

- School-Link modules:
 - School-Link Training Phase 1: Adolescent Depression and related disorders
 - School-Link Training Phase 2: Further issues in assessment and management of adolescent depression and related disorders -self-harm
 - School-Link Training Phase 3: The assessment and management of mental distress and wellbeing in Aboriginal, cultural and linguistically diverse and same sex attracted young people
 - School-Link Training Phase 4: Co-existing mental disorder and substance use problems in adolescents
 - School-Link Training Phase 5: Assessment and management of anxiety in children and adolescents

12. Schedules

12.1 Schedule 1: NSW School-Link Training Program

Description of Schedule:

This schedule sets out a guide for activities and collaboration between NSW Health and the Department of Education and Training in the development and implementation of the NSW School-Link Training Initiative.

Training modules developed and presented have covered:

- the identification and collaborative treatment of depression and related disorders in adolescents
- the management of self-harm
- the support of students with depression and other related disorders from diverse backgrounds (Aboriginal), same sex attracted, and culturally and linguistically diverse
- the assessment and support of students with co-existing mental disorder and substance abuse problems.

Module 5, on the support and management of students with anxiety related disorders, has been developed and is currently being delivered across NSW.

Key activities under the schedule

- Identification of the focus of future training program modules by the NSW School-Link Management Committee
- Scoping of the learning needs of participants
- Establishment of the Advisory panel/ curriculum group for development of new modules
- Review and evaluation of each model
- Maintenance of attendance statistics in accordance with reporting requirements as determined by the School-Link Management Committee
- Ensuring that current research informs the ongoing development of the training modules
- Developing and monitoring the partnership between NSW Department of Education and Training and NSW Health in relation to the training
- The NSW Institute of Psychiatry to be involved in the NSW School-Link-Management Committee discussions concerning the development of future modules
- Training modules delivered and evaluated by the NSW School-Link Training Project Officers
- Identification of and reporting on key performance indicators for the NSW School-Link Training Program.

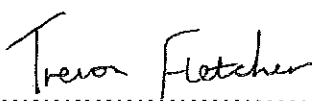
Evaluation of activities undertaken under the schedule.

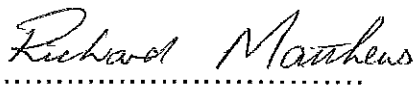
- NSW Department of Education and Training and NSW Health to review and evaluate the NSW School-Link Training Program
- The School-Link Training Project Officers (based at NSW Institute of Psychiatry) will maintain databases of attendance at each course as well as carry out evaluations of each course.

- In addition, Project Officers will report in accordance with NSW Health's reporting policies, under the Interagency Action Plan for Better Mental health and also the State Plan priority F3 quarterly reporting structure. The School-Link Training Project Officers will provide regular progress and evaluation reports of the School-Link training program to the NSW School-Link Management Committee.

Commencement date of schedule
27 January 2009

13. Signatures, designations and dates.


..... Date ...19.12.08
Trevor Fletcher
Deputy Director General Schools
NSW Department of Education and Training


..... Date ...27/1/09
Dr Richard Matthews
Deputy Director General, Strategic Development
NSW Health

Appendix 1

NSW School-Link Initiative Background

The NSW School-Link initiative is one of a range of initiatives launched in 1999 by the NSW Government to improve the mental health of children, adolescents and young people in NSW. NSW Health in collaboration with the NSW Department of Education and Training provide the management of the NSW School-Link initiative with state-wide coordination and leadership. The School-Link initiative addresses many important priorities outlined in state and national mental health policies.

School-Link provides a framework and structure to support child and adolescent mental health services, schools and TAFE colleges to work collaboratively to promote mental health, prevent mental health problems and facilitate early identification, management and support of students with mental health problems.

The broad implementation of School-Link over the past nine years has built a foundation of organisational support and infrastructure to achieve these aims. The three key strategic actions are: 1) pathways to care/shared collaboration; 2) training and education; and, 3) school/TAFE based mental health promotion and prevention programs. The NSW School-Link initiative is implemented across NSW by School-Link Coordinators and other School-Link staff, located in the Area Health Services.

A NSW Strategic School-Link Plan is being developed to provide a consistent framework for the ongoing delivery and evaluation of the NSW School-Link initiative in health services, schools and TAFE colleges across NSW. The plan will include strategies to expand the success of the School-Link initiative into Primary Schools and carry it into the next phase of development. The *NSW Interagency Action Plan for Mental Health* identifies the extension of evidence-based prevention programs to primary schools as a priority.

Appendix 2

Terms of Reference for the School-Link Management Committee

The terms of reference are:

- Set the overall direction, governance structure and have management responsibility for implementing the NSW School-Link initiative in NSW.
- Advise on strategic directions and frameworks relating to the NSW School-Link Initiative for NSW Health and the NSW Department of Education and Training
- Review reports, proposals and recommendations from the local School-Link Advisory Forums.
- Review the annual School-Link report from each Area Health Service prepared in collaboration with Area School-Link Advisory Committee/s
- Support the continuing development of the strong and effective partnership between NSW Health and the NSW Department of Education and Training. This includes review of this Memorandum of Understanding between the NSW Department of Education and Training and NSW Health and the development of agreements/Memorandum of Understanding with other key partners in education
- Facilitate and support links with other key initiatives, such as drug and alcohol, MindMatters and suicide prevention.
- Ensure that the NSW School-Link Initiative covers the full range of interventions and age groups (primary age to young people) and includes a focus on co-existing mental health problems, particularly with drug and alcohol
- Ensure that the NSW School-Link Initiative links to and addresses commitments in NSW Government policy directions such as the NSW State Plan, and the Interagency Plan for Mental Health
- Develop joint Department research projects

Reporting relationships

The Committee will report to the Deputy Director General, Schools, NSW Department of Education and Training and the Deputy Director General, Strategic Development, NSW Health

Membership

Dr Titia Sprague MH-Kids
Dr Sandra Heriot – MH-Kids
Ms Bernadette Dagg – MH Kids
Mr Roger Stonehouse – DET
Ms Ruth Still – DET
Mr David McKie - DET

Frequency of meetings

The committee will meet bi-monthly, at a minimum.

Secretariat

MH-Kids and the NSW Department of Education and Training will rotate the chair position and secretariat on an annual basis.

MH-Kids will Chair and provide Secretariat for first 12 months to support the committee. This support will comprise agenda papers, minutes and follow-up of actions arising from the decisions of the committee.

Timeframe for Review

Reviewed annually in relation to performance.