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# YOUTH HEALTH RESOURCE KIT

AN ESSENTIAL GUIDE FOR WORKERS

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INTRODUCTION

# YOUTH HEALTH RESOURCE KIT

An Essential Guide For Workers

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In 2008 Jane was awarded the NSW Law and Justice Foundation's Justice Medal, for "outstanding individual achievement in improving access to justice, especially for socially and economically disadvantaged people".

**Thank you also to those who contributed to the Adolescent Health GP Resource Kit, first and second editions, from which this Kit drew inspiration.**

## FOREWORD

Every time a young person seeks health care, we are given a unique opportunity. We have the chance to not only talk with them about their health issues or concerns, but also to holistically assess their needs.

Because most of the health problems young people experience are related to psychosocial risk factors and behaviours, health services that take an informed and comprehensive approach to working with young people are best placed to ensure that their young clients not only receive the care they need for their presenting concerns, but also that emerging problems or concerns are identified early and addressed appropriately.

Working with young people can be challenging for health professionals. Not only are there medico-legal factors (such as consent to medical treatment) to consider, but a young person's evolving maturity, cultural values, life experiences, risk-taking behaviours, and chronic illnesses or conditions (if present) can further complicate the relationship, requiring the health professional to draw on a range of skills to work effectively with the individual.

As they move through the teenage years, young people often seek to take more personal responsibility for their health care – a normal developmental process that service providers should support. This, too, requires the health professional to have skills in working with young people both as an independent person and in the context of family relationships.

*The Youth Health Resource Kit: An Essential Guide for Workers* has been designed specifically for health and allied professionals working with young people. It is a practical toolkit offering tips and techniques for working with young people and is intended to enhance skills in understanding, communicating with and engaging clients within caring, positive health care relationships.

Providing services and care that are responsive and flexible to the needs of young people – that are youth-friendly – is the key to effectively meeting the health care needs of our young people. This Kit provides the information and resources needed to create accessible, relevant and welcoming services for young people and to improve the health outcomes for young people accessing services.

We would like to thank the authors, reviewers and project working group who contributed to the development of the Kit with such skill and commitment.

We are pleased to commend to you the *Youth Health Resource Kit: An Essential Guide for Workers*.



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## INTRODUCTION

### An adolescent who is healthy is the best foundation for a healthy adult life.

*The Lancet* editorial [www.thelancet.com](http://www.thelancet.com), 379, April 28, 2012 p. 1561.

Youth health problems are often complex and require a comprehensive, bio-psychosocial approach. The *Youth Health Resource Kit: An Essential Guide for Workers* is a practical guide to providing effective health care for young people. It identifies strategies and practical steps that workers can take to:

- Engage and communicate effectively with young people
- Better understand the social and cultural diversity of young people
- Assess young people's health risks
- Manage youth health problems
- Make services youth-friendly and accessible to young people

This Kit outlines the skills needed for working with the young person and their family, while addressing the developmental, cultural and environmental factors that influence their health status.

You will find the terms 'adolescents' and 'young people' often used interchangeably within the Kit, which is in line with the *NSW Youth Health Policy 2011-2016* which covers the age group 12-24 years.

### WHO IS THIS KIT FOR?

The *Youth Health Resource Kit: An Essential Guide for Workers* was developed with a diverse audience in mind. It is for people working within the health system who want to learn about working more effectively with young people and it's for those who already work with young people in the health context but who want to develop their knowledge about a specific aspect of youth health.

Although the Kit was written primarily for health professionals, much of the information in this Kit will be useful for service providers and professionals employed outside the health system who work with young people to support or promote their health and wellbeing.

The Kit has been designed to provide information about the major issues associated with meeting the needs of young people and providing services that are responsive and youth-friendly.

### THE KIT IS SUITABLE FOR:

- Professionals working within NSW Health services (e.g. youth health services, youth mental health services, Justice Health, drug and alcohol services, sexual health services, population health, health promotion, community health, transcultural mental health, hospitals, and transition care among others)
- People working in non-government organisations (e.g. youth health services, family planning, headspace, online services, youth support services, and Indigenous health organisations such as Aboriginal Medical Services)
- Professionals working in government agencies that focus on young people (e.g. government and non-government school counsellors, school nurses, child protection case workers, university and TAFE student support, Juvenile Justice)

### HOW WAS THIS KIT DEVELOPED?

The *Youth Health Resource Kit: An Essential Guide for Workers* is based on the Adolescent Health GP Resource Kit (2008), second edition, which was produced for General Practitioners (GPs). The *Adolescent Health GP Resource Kit* can be found on the NSW Kids and Families website.

Visit [www.kidsfamilies.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.kidsfamilies.health.nsw.gov.au)

We consulted widely with representatives of the intended audience for the Kit so that we understood the context in which they were working with young people, their information needs, and how they might use the Kit. We interviewed and conducted focus groups with workers from youth health services, non-government organisations, and specialist clinical services to elicit ideas from the broadest audience possible. We included services working with young people in metropolitan, regional and rural areas.

We then contracted expert authors (see *appendix*) to draft sections of the Kit, which were then reviewed by content expert reviewers and the project's advisory group.

## WHAT'S IN THE KIT?

The Kit is divided into three sections.

### SECTION ONE: UNDERSTANDING YOUNG PEOPLE

- 1.1 Adolescence – a developmental perspective
- 1.2 The health and wellbeing of young Australians

### SECTION TWO: PROVIDING HEALTH SERVICES TO YOUNG PEOPLE

- 2.1 The Australian health care system
- 2.2 Young people and health services
- 2.3 Collaboration and case management
- 2.4 Using technology

### SECTION THREE: SKILLS FOR PROVIDING YOUTH-FRIENDLY SERVICES

- 3.1 Youth-friendly communication
- 3.2 Psychosocial assessment
- 3.3 Understanding risk-taking behaviour
- 3.4 Trauma-informed practice
- 3.5 Medico-legal issues
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- 3.7 Resilience and Indigenous young people
- 3.8 Substance use
- 3.9 Mental health
- 3.10 Sexual health
- 3.11 Chronic conditions and disability
- 3.12 Healthy lifestyles
- 3.13 Working with families

