INTRODUCTION

YOUTH HEALTH RESOURCE KIT

An Essential Guide For Workers
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the following people who have worked together to make the Kit possible:

**PROJECT COORDINATOR**

Dr Carmen Jarrett, Analyst, Youth Health and Wellbeing, NSW Kids and Families

**PROJECT REFERENCE GROUP**

Helen Andriotis, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Justice and Forensic Mental Health Network

Lynne Brodie, Network Manager, Transition Care, Agency for Clinical Innovation

Peter Chown, Psychologist and Consultant, NSW CAAH and NSW Kids and Families

Dr Ann Dadich, University of Western Sydney

Bernadette Dagg, Interagency Manager, Mental Health Children and Young People

Cheryl Davenport, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Youth Mental Health, Eastern Sydney

Kristen Day, Manager, Community Health for Adolescents in Need (CHAIN), Wollongong

Dr Sally Gibson, Senior Manager, Youth Health and Wellbeing, NSW Kids and Families

Dr Carmen Jarrett, Analyst, Youth Health and Wellbeing, NSW Kids and Families

Fiona Lo, Youth Mental Health Program Officer, Transcultural Mental Health Centre

Kate Reakes, GP Sexual Health Project Manager, NSW Sexually Transmissible Infections Programs Unit

Fiona Robards, Senior Analyst, Youth Health and Wellbeing, NSW Kids and Families

Michele Sapucci, Program Leader, Mental Health Promotion, Prevention & Early Intervention, Transcultural Mental Health Centre

**CONSULTATIONS**

Our thanks to the following people, groups and organisations who participated in the consultations that informed the development of this resource:

Clinical Associate Professor Susan Towns, Senior Staff Specialist and Head, Department of Adolescent Medicine, The Sydney Children’s Hospitals Network

Dr Bronwyn Milne, Staff Specialist, Department of Adolescent Medicine, The Children’s Hospital at Westmead

Anthony Pullen, Nursing Unit Manager, Adolescent Ward at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead

Pozhet, Sydney

Family Planning NSW Penrith

Community Health for Adolescents in Need (CHAIN), Wollongong

Youth health workers from the Eastern suburbs of Sydney

Youth workers from the Coffs Harbour area

Justice and Forensic Mental Health Network, Pagewood

Kurrambee School, Kingswood
EXPERT REVIEWERS AND ADVISORS
Our thanks to:

**Helen Andriotis and colleagues** from the Justice and Forensic Mental Health Network

**Clinical Professor David Bennett AO**, Senior Clinical Advisor, Youth Health and Wellbeing, NSW Kids and Families

**Madeleine Bridgett**, Manager, Trapeze, Sydney Children’s Hospitals Network

**Lynne Brodie**, Network Manager, Transition Care, NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation

**Dr Andrew J. Campbell**, Senior Lecturer in Psychology, Faculty of Health Sciences, The University of Sydney

**Jodie Caruana**, School-Link Coordinator, Department of Psychological Medicine, Sydney Children’s Hospitals Network

**Dr Ann Dadich**, University of Western Sydney

**Bernadette Dagg**, Mental Health Children and Young People

**Cheryl Davenport**, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Youth Mental Health, Eastern Sydney

**Dr Sally Gibson**, Senior Manager, Youth Health and Wellbeing, NSW Kids and Families

**Dr Bronwyn Milne**, Staff Specialist, Department of Adolescent Medicine, The Children’s Hospital at Westmead

**Fiona Robards**, Senior Analyst, Youth Health and Wellbeing, NSW Kids and Families

**Associate Professor Lena Sanci**, who was an author of the chapter on medico-legal issues in the Adolescent Health GP Resource Kit which provided a major source for chapter 3.5 Medico-legal issues in this Kit.

**Jane Sanders**, Principal Solicitor, The Shopfront Youth Legal Centre

**Maria Cassaniti** Centre Manager, Transcultural Mental Health Centre.

**Dr Catherine Silsbury**, Senior Staff Specialist, Addiction Medicine, The Children’s Hospital at Westmead and Western Sydney Local Health District

**Professor Kate Steinbeck**, Chair in Adolescent Medicine, The University of Sydney

**Clinical Associate Professor Susan Towns**, Senior Staff Specialist and Head, Department of Adolescent Medicine, Sydney Children’s Hospitals Network

ADMINISTRATIVE AND DESIGN SUPPORT

**Ms Wui-Ken Yap**, Analyst, Youth Health and Wellbeing, NSW Kids and Families

**Hulya Unsal**, Administrative Officer, Youth Health and Wellbeing, NSW Kids and Families

EDITING

**Siobhan Pope**, Pope Management
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The Youth Health Resource Kit: An Essential Guide for Workers has several authors. The principal author or authors of each chapter is acknowledged at the beginning of that chapter.

**Peter Chown BSc Psych MAPS**  
*Psychologist and Consultant in private practice*

Peter Chown has 30 years of experience as a Psychologist. He was formerly head of Cellblock Youth Health Centre - a pioneering, multidisciplinary health service for adolescents at risk - at The Children’s Hospital, Camperdown in Sydney. Peter has extensive experience in adolescent health, the development of youth-friendly health services and programs, and in training health professionals. He has worked as a consultant for the World Health Organisation, UNFPA and UNESCO on adolescent health programs in more than a dozen developing countries in Asia, Africa and the Pacific. He is the author of many publications for schools, GPs and counsellors on adolescent health. Peter works in private practice as a Psychologist in northern NSW. He specialises in working with adolescents at risk and their families.

**Melissa Kang MBBS MCH**  
*Senior Lecturer, Department of General Practice, The University of Sydney*

Melissa Kang trained in general practice and has worked exclusively in youth health since 1993. She has worked clinically in community and hospital settings, and currently works in a youth health centre with high-risk and homeless young people. Her research activity spans adolescent sexuality, adolescent sexual health (including her doctoral study on chlamydia and other sexually transmitted infections), and access to primary health care among young people. Melissa teaches postgraduate courses in adolescent sexual health at the University of Sydney.

Melissa has worked extensively in training of professionals from a wide range of disciplines. Melissa has written the “Dolly Doctor” column for Dolly magazine for more than 20 years and has appeared on national radio and television talking about young people and sexual health. She is a co-author of Dolly Doctor: your body, your life, every question answered and Dolly Doctor: the boy book.

**Fiona Robards BSc MA MAATH MHA MPH**  
*Senior Analyst, Youth Health and Wellbeing, NSW Kids and Families; Clinical Senior Lecturer, General Practice, The University of Sydney*

Fiona Robards is a Psychologist with four Masters Degrees: In Psychology, Art Therapy, Health Management and Public Health. Fiona was the Manager of the NSW Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health from 2007 until 2013, leading the development of the NSW Youth Health Policy 2011-2016.

As Senior Analyst, she provides high-level advice to the NSW Ministry of Health, the Minister and other parts of Government on youth health. She develops policy and guidelines and leads projects to develop innovative models of care, create evidence-based resources and build the capacity of the health workforce.

Fiona also teaches the Public Health and Advanced Adolescent Sexual Health for the Department of General Practice at the University of Sydney.
Shane Hearne BSc MPP PhD  
*Health Consultant*

Shane Hearne has worked in Indigenous Affairs for more than 17 years, including 13 years as the first tenured Aboriginal academic in the School of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine at the University of Sydney. He has extensive experience in communication, public relations, community engagement, teaching, research, policy development and program management.

Shane’s previous research has focused on Indigenous adolescents and health promotion, and specifically on identifying the factors in their lives that support them to make positive choices about their education, employment, and health and to reach their goals. His main body of research work has examined aspects of the health and wellbeing of adolescents, with a focus on comparing Indigenous and non-Indigenous adolescents aged 13-17 attending school in NSW. It is the first study to examine the relationships between resilience, mental health and a wide range of health-related behaviours.

Leticia Funston BA BSW  
*Researcher, NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence*

Leticia Funston has worked as a social worker, activist and researcher in the field of feminist and LGTBIQ informed anti-violence, Indigenous and migrant solidarity, and housing rights. Leticia is currently employed as a researcher at the NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence and is a PhD candidate with the Social Work faculty at the University of Sydney. Leticia’s PhD research provides a critical exploration of the emergence of ‘trauma-informed practice’ and ‘cultural safety’ in the context of homelessness service provision in Australia and Canada.

Jane Sanders BCom LLB  
*Principal Solicitor, The Shopfront Youth Legal Centre*

Jane Sanders is the principal solicitor of the Shopfront Youth Legal Centre, a free legal service for homeless and disadvantaged young people, based in inner-city Sydney. The Shopfront provides court representation and other legal services to young people with high and complex needs who are unable to effectively access Legal Aid and other mainstream legal services.

Jane is an accredited specialist in criminal law and children’s law. She has 20 years’ experience appearing in court for children and young adults charged with criminal offences. She also advises young people about a range of other legal issues.

Jane also provides legal information and training for young people and those who work with them, including health professionals, youth workers and lawyers. This frequently includes topics such as young people’s capacity to live independently, access to health care, confidentiality, the age of consent, and mandatory reporting of children at risk.

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*.

Joanna Holt  
Chief Executive  
NSW Kids and Families

Clin Prof David Bennett AO  
Senior Clinical Adviser  
Youth Health and Wellbeing Team,  
NSW Kids and Families
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INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

3.6 Cultural diversity and culturally-competent practice

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