

# Keep Them Safe Whole Family Teams

An innovative, integrated partnership approach to health care

## Introduction

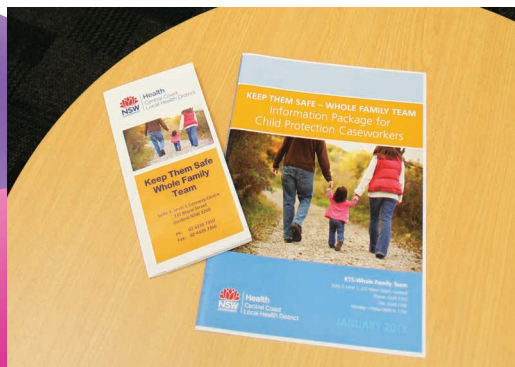
Keep Them Safe is the NSW Government response to the Wood Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW. NSW Health was funded to improve child safety by supporting the needs of parents with mental health and drug and alcohol problems.

The unique Whole Family Teams integrated outreach partnership model operates assertively to prevent these vulnerable families falling between the gaps. Key partners include mental health, drug and alcohol and community services. The model of care was informed by an intensive interrogation of the international literature on evidence based interventions for families with complex mental health and drug and alcohol needs and co-existing child safety concerns.

## Key activities

Local health districts (LHDs) are funded to deliver Whole Family Teams interventions, with teams located in Gosford, Newcastle, Nowra and Lismore. Forty six specialist clinical staff are currently employed across four LHDs and provide services to over 200 vulnerable families with complex needs each year. Referrals are primarily from Community Services.

Under the Whole Family Teams model, drug and alcohol and mental health multidisciplinary clinicians work as one team and in close partnership with community service professionals. Services include individual, group and family specialist interventions, and are delivered in the home and the community. They involve joint specialist assessment and treatment, information sharing and workforce development.



## Key achievements

An independent evaluation found that Whole Family Teams were highly successful in delivering against the pilot project objectives.

There were clinically significant improvements in parental mental health as measured by both clinicians and parents. Drug and alcohol outcomes also improved.

Measures of family functioning which include aspects such as parenting, family relationships and child wellbeing all improved significantly.

Child safety also improved significantly, as evidenced by the substantial reduction (58.4 per cent) in the rate of risk of significant harm reports for children in families who completed the Whole Family Teams program.

The pilot program received an extension of funding under Keep Them Safe until June 2016.

## Acknowledgements

The project's success can be attributed to the dedicated commitment of the teams who are working with families with highly complex needs, strong governance support and interagency partnerships at state and local levels.

