

POLICIES

POLICIES for Prevention of Mental Disorders

[3] Indicated Programs

- a) Biological factors
- b) Psychological factors
 - i Children in detention
 - ii Children of parents with mental illness
- c) Social factors

[3 b ii] Psychological factors: Children of parents with mental illness

Children whose parents have a mental illness have significantly higher rates of emotional problems than general community prevalence. The stresses they experience are often unrecognized by clinicians-who work with their parents. It is recommended that a family impact assessment be undertaken of **all** adult patients with mental illness to ensure that those with children are linked with services which can support the family and respond to the needs of children and their parents, as a family group and as individuals. It is further recommended that there should be family intervention planning, a family recovery focus, and active collaboration, communication and coordination between services and families.

When a child has a parent with mental illness all tiers of the service system have the potential to be involved – in prevention, and early intervention, and treatment.

At the primary care level, maternal and child health nurses may be involved, with staff at early learning centres, and primary and secondary schools having opportunities to observe child behaviour, and to liaise with and offer support to the parent.

General Practitioners are also able to make observations, and as with the above groups, refer children or parents on to community based allied health professionals including social workers, psychologists, occupational therapists, for counselling services, or to child and family welfare services for parenting support.

Where mental illness of a child or parent is acute, outpatient, or inpatient treatment may be needed.

An evidence-based prevention program for children

An evidence-based program addressing resilience in children of parents with mental illness is the Family Talk program. It is a family-based program designed for mental health professionals working with parents experiencing depression and/or anxiety, to foster resilience in their children and the family unit.

Online training for the Family Talk program can be accessed via:

<https://emergingminds.com.au/training/family-focus/>

The Family Talk online training is based on the following research:

Beardslee, W. R., Gladstone, T. R. G., Wright, E. J., & Cooper, A. B. (2003). A family-based approach to the prevention of depressive symptoms in children at risk: Evidence of parental and child change. *Pediatrics*, 112, e119-e131.

Beardslee, W. R., Wright, E. J., Gladstone, T. R. G., & Forbes, P. (2007). Long-term effects from a randomized trial of two public health preventive interventions for parental depression. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 21(4), 703-713.

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Last updated 24/9/2018