

Health promotion strategies



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Editorial/Welcome

Welcome to the second edition of *Health Promotion Strategies* for 2005. This edition highlights policy, programs, strategies and partnerships that focus on mental health promotion.

Mental health disorders constitute 10 per cent of the global burden of disease. One in five Australians will experience a mental illness at some stage in their lifetime. Depression alone will represent one of the largest health problems worldwide by the year 2020.

It has been shown that well-established social networks and relationships can act as a buffer between an individual's wellbeing and their socioeconomic, cultural and environmental conditions. In other words, when people have strong relationships with those around them, they have a greater sense of wellbeing. Further, communities that are well connected, with strong social networks, are more likely to benefit from lower crime figures, better health, higher educational achievement and better economic growth.

The timing of this edition coincides with the government's renewed focus on a determinants approach. The recently released social policy statement, *A Fairer Victoria, creating opportunity and addressing disadvantage*, strengthens the current *Growing Victoria Together—a vision for Victoria to 2010 and beyond* policy platform. The recent Victorian Government budget signalled a funding increase of \$124.8 million over four years dedicated to expanding mental health services. New initiatives will focus on supporting people with particular needs, investing in the mental health workforce, early intervention and prevention initiatives for children and youth, and practice change and building capacity beyond mental health.

VicHealth's *Mental Health Promotion Plan 2005–2007* profiles the most influential determinants of mental health, including social inclusion, preventing discrimination and violence, and improving access to economic resources, such as employment, income and housing. This prioritisation of the determinants of health recognises the changing environment in which we live and the shift towards a non-traditional understanding of mental health and wellbeing. Reflecting these, this edition includes articles on the VicHealth Mental Health Promotion Plan, the cost to society of intimate partner violence, the Koori Communities Leadership Program and evaluation of the Refugee Relocation Program.

This edition also highlights projects that focus on collaborative partnerships, tackle health inequalities and prioritise a determinants of health approach. We look at a community health intervention from Upper Murray Family Care that supports children who have a parent with mental illness; and a project that promotes student wellbeing by embracing cultural and linguistic diversity; the Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture work in refugee schooling and *beyondblue*'s National Depression in the Workplace Program.

We hope you continue to find this bulletin useful and welcome your feedback and suggestions. The next edition will focus on initiatives aimed at promoting physical activity.

Dr Robert Hall
Director Public Health
Chief Health Officer

VicHealth Plans for Action in Promoting Mental Health

In the last decade there has been increasing recognition internationally of the growing impact of mental health problems and disorders. Indeed, it is predicted that by 2020, depression alone will contribute over 20 per cent to the total burden of disease, making it the second largest contributor to the global disease burden.

The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) is amongst the world's leaders in planning health promotion frameworks that address the growing and complex issues of mental health and wellbeing.

In 1999, VicHealth developed the *Mental Health Promotion Plan 1999–2002*, which provided a framework for promoting mental health and wellbeing. Significant gains have been achieved in addressing other public health problems using health promotion approaches, such as reductions in tobacco use, motor vehicle deaths and cardiovascular disease. VicHealth's *Mental Health Promotion Plan* applied these approaches to address the growing mental health burden.

VicHealth's current plan for mental health promotion, *A Plan for Action 2005–2007: Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing*, draws on this experience and evidence. It reflects the emerging international consensus that there are limits to addressing mental health problems by focusing on early identification, treatment and rehabilitation services alone—they are too common, their human, social and economic consequences too great, and the costs of treatment too large.

In the foreword of *A Plan for Action 2005–2007*, VicHealth CEO Dr Rob Moodie and Dr Shekhar Saxena, Coordinator of Mental Health for the World Health Organization (WHO), argue for a determinants approach to mental health and wellbeing that focuses on cross-sectoral collaboration and works towards the development of an evidence base.

The potential in such an approach is significant. The factors in the environments in which we live, work, recreate, are educated and form relationships with one another are known to be powerful influences on mental health. A determinants approach emphasises our ability to modify these factors and so address the growing mental health burden.

The Plan recognises that the fundamental challenge facing the international community is to identify and invest in better ways of promoting mental health and wellbeing and preventing problems before they occur

The Plan for Action focuses on shaping healthy environments through health promotion strategies, campaigns to raise awareness, education and training for professionals; supporting positive changes in organisations; working with communities; and advocating for reform of legislation and programs.

As many of the factors influencing mental health lie outside of the health care sector, partnerships with individuals and organisations in other sectors, such as housing, employment, sports, arts and recreation, education and income security, as well as partnerships with state and Commonwealth governments and non-government organisations, are key to the implementation of the plan. Such partnerships increase the resource base for mental health promotion, engage a wider range of sectors, and ensure that mental health promotion is integrated into new and existing initiatives in a sustained way.

Further information

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Indigenous leadership a key to wellbeing

A comprehensive consultation responding to the challenge of promoting the emotional and spiritual wellbeing of Victoria's Koori communities has confirmed the significance of a holistic approach and the support of Indigenous leadership.

The consultation, led by a Koori Task Group, with broad representation from the Koori community, considered and provided advice to VicHealth on the key elements required to ensure the emotional and spiritual wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities and their ongoing survival and growth. Indigenous leadership was identified as crucial.

'We need to identify what we want our future to look like, to feel safe, to feel connected and to have a sense of ownership and control over our destiny. Young Aboriginal people have an important role in the defining of our future.... Their voice can be heard and must be heard.'

(Paul Briggs and Daphne Yarram, *Building Indigenous Leadership*)

The Koori Communities Leadership Program recognises the need to support Indigenous youth to play a role in 'defining the future'. It is the first program of its kind to include community-based youth leadership projects and a statewide network. The aim of the Leadership Program is to strengthen Indigenous communities in Victoria by fostering an environment in which individuals, families and communities can increase their self-reliance and develop a sense of shared purpose and vision.

Building Indigenous Leadership, Promoting the Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing of Koori Communities through the Koori Communities Leadership Program records the experiences and key learnings of the five Koori community-based leadership projects and the statewide leadership network.

Copies are available on the website: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au or by order from email: mentalhealth@vichealth.vic.gov.au

Supporting Kids who have a parent with a mental illness

Supporting Kids, a community-based program delivered by Upper Murray Family Care, is providing valuable support to children and families in Victoria's north east who are affected by mental illness.

The program was developed by the Supporting Kids Steering Committee, which was formed in response to an expressed public health need—a parent who experiences mental illness asked why there were no support services or assistance to help her children learn about and cope with her illness. This request inspired a range of agencies to work together with parents and children to create a local solution. The result, Supporting Kids, has been in existence since April 2001 and is now providing support and educational activities to children and families across the region.

Services and supports include school peer support programs, school holiday programs and camps for children aged 5–12 years, and intensive work with families to develop 'Family Plans' for times when a parent is unwell. Families have also identified the need for assistance with parenting and work is being done in collaboration with key agencies to develop options for parenting support. Supporting Kids is also influencing practice change and playing a significant role in community and professional education and mental health promotion.

The program involves agencies and parents working together to understand and address the needs of children of parents with a mental illness. It is delivered by Upper Murray Family Care,

with involvement and support from agencies and individuals, including clinical mental health services, psychiatric disability rehabilitation and support services, community health services, community-based agencies, parents and children, and La Trobe and Charles Sturt universities. A successful partnership has also developed with Eastern Health Mental Health to run programs as part of Vic Champs, funded through a further partnership between VicHealth, beyondblue and the Department of Human Services' Mental Health Branch. All partner agencies have contributed time, enthusiasm and effort to this innovative and ground-breaking partnership, and many have contributed financial resources as well.

The ongoing involvement of parents and children is a priority of the Supporting Kids Steering Committee and this has been achieved with support from all members. The partnership with a tertiary institution demonstrates the desire to contribute to the published knowledge about this target group and to ensure that sustainable, effective models of service delivery are based on sound evidence of need.

Further Information

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WORKs promotes youth employment

A major determinant for health and wellbeing in Western society is employment. Young people from disadvantaged areas are over-represented in unemployment statistics. Young unemployed people often have great difficulty navigating the maze of Centrelink and job network processes designed to assist them into employment; and many lack the confidence to approach employers when seeking a job.

A new program called WORKs is being trialled in the Eaglehawk and Long Gully Neighbourhood Renewal areas of Bendigo to address these issues.

WORKs is a partnership between youth support agencies, Centrelink, two job network agencies and Neighbourhood Renewal. Participants come from Neighbourhood Renewal areas and are referred by friends, families, neighbourhood houses and other networks. The WORKs program introduces the young person to a youth worker who acts as a case manager and forms a vocational team along with a worker from Centrelink and a job network worker. Together this team assists the young person to understand their employment and career options and map pathways to achieve their goals.

The young person is supported on their journey. This may include personal support from the team; financial support through the job seeker account and Centrelink sources; and assistance to meet prospective employers and build confidence through the WORKs bus, which tours local employers in Bendigo to introduce young people to employers and employment opportunities.

The WORKs program was successfully trialled with homeless youth last year and was launched in Neighbourhood Renewal areas in April. Four participants are currently receiving support through the program.

Further information

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School's in for refugees

Many children and young people who arrive in Australia from war-torn countries have experienced violence, displacement, loss and separation of family, and lack of safety and care. They may have been deprived of education, nutrition, health care, even the opportunity to play. When they arrive in Australia, there is the possibility of addressing these risk factors by increasing their access to protective factors, building on their resilience to survive horrendous events.

As one of the first experiences of young refugees entering Australia is attending school, our schools have a unique role in providing an environment that nurtures resilience and reduces vulnerability.

Schools that are able to nurture the mental health and wellbeing of refugee students provide a sound foundation for students' educational outcomes, their recovery from past trauma and their settlement in Australia.

Since 1987, the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST) has provided direct care to people who were subjected to torture or trauma while in or fleeing their countries of origin. VFST also seeks to enhance the capacity of government and non-government agencies to support refugees. The education system has been an important focus for this work.

For schools, an intake of refugee students requires flexibility and, possibly, new knowledge and work practices.

Partnerships between VFST and schools helped to identify issues and needs related to refugee students, including:

- professional development to enhance knowledge of the refugee experience, the impact on students, and strategies for managing behaviour and learning difficulties

- policies and practices to ensure the school environment is supportive of diversity and the needs of refugee students and their families
- teaching resources to support the needs of refugee students, including resources that promote understanding of human rights issues amongst non-refugee students
- partnerships and links with educational initiatives such as MindMatters and School Focused Youth Service to raise the profile of refugee issues.

VFST is currently promoting the strategies outlined in *School's In for Refugees: Whole School Guide to Refugee Readiness* (2004) across the Victorian education system, and supporting selected schools with a high number of refugee enrolments to integrate such strategies. This and other publications for schools are available from VFST's website at www.survivorsvic.org.au.

As Bernie Marshall, President of the Australian Health Promoting Schools Association says in the Foreword to *School's in for Refugees*: 'International research has found that achieving meaningful education, health and welfare outcomes for students involves taking action across a whole range of school operations, with a whole-school approach'. Partnerships between schools and VFST highlight that strong collaboration between educational and social support agencies is key to building the supportive environment that is so critical to the mental health and wellbeing of their refugee students.

Further information

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Evaluating refugee relocation projects

Two projects seeking to attract refugee arrivals to live in the regional centres of Swan Hill and Warrnambool are currently being evaluated by Victoria University, with support from VicHealth.

The Victorian and Australian governments have shown increasing interest in migrant and refugee settlement in rural and regional areas. Such settlement has the potential to promote mental health and wellbeing among new arrivals and to increase employment opportunities, stimulate population growth and increase community diversity in regions.

it is important that resettlement and relocation to regional centres is carefully planned to ensure that the range of conditions for positive mental health and wellbeing are met

However, international and emerging Australian experience indicates that for refugee arrivals, many of whom have had past experiences of trauma and deprivation, it is important that resettlement and relocation to regional centres is carefully planned to ensure that the range of conditions for positive mental health and wellbeing are met.

The evaluation expects to identify good practices to assist Federal, state and local governments and local and regional communities to plan future initiatives. The evaluation should be completed in March 2006.

Further information

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The Student Wellbeing and Cultural Diversity Project: promoting supportive environments

Over the past two years, the Student Wellbeing and Cultural Diversity Project has focused on building relationships and connections between young people and their school, embracing cultural and linguistic diversity, and promoting mental health and resilience.

Schools play a key role in providing safe and supportive environments for students. As the principal source of contact between refugee families and their new society, schools have an important role in making the settlement experience of children and young people a positive one, and in assisting them in all developmental phases.

Belonging in a community teaches people about relationships and values, and enhances connectedness and resilience. In this sense it is a protective factor in mental health (Community Matters, 2001 pp 13–14).

Children and young people's capacity to cope is strongly influenced by the quality of their family, community and school environment in the period following their arrival in a safe country. Lack of support at this time places children and young people from refugee backgrounds at risk of developing mental health and behavioural difficulties, the effects of which may compromise their ability to form relationships, their school performance and their capacity to accomplish the normal developmental tasks of childhood and adolescence (*VFST School-based program for children and young people from refugee backgrounds and their families—pamphlet*).

The Student Wellbeing and Cultural Diversity project is a partnership between the Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture (VFST); the Austin Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS); the Darebin, Whittlesea and Yarra School Focussed Youth Services (SFYS); MindMatters (a Commonwealth mental health initiative for secondary schools); and Preston Girls' Secondary College, Northcote High School, Collingwood College and, in 2005, Fitzroy and Richmond West primary schools. The project grew out of many years of discussion, joint work, research and planning by VFST and Austin CAMHS, and draws on their expertise and experience.

The northern corridor of Melbourne has a high proportion of children, young people and families from cultural and linguistically diverse and refugee backgrounds (Census statistics 2001). As the number of refugee families referred to and treated by the Austin CAMHS has increased, there has been a real need for the service to develop its skills in working with these families and strengthen its connections with other key stakeholders, such as VFST and the Department of Education and Training. SFYS funding provided the means for these stakeholders to work together and the SFYS Coordinator played a major role in engaging the schools. MindMatters provided an existing framework to use.

The project is divided into five areas:

- A 10-week classroom program for the middle years (using universal mental health promotion approach incorporating the Kaleidoscope resource and MindMatters).
- Secondary consultation to partner schools.
- Professional development to partner schools.

- Steering committee comprising partner agencies and schools.
- Parent forum or activities.

The idea was to bring together clinical and teaching experience to develop a classroom resource to reach and make connections to culturally and linguistically diverse and refugee students, and also to impact on school connection of students generally.

Working collaboratively in the classroom and school, students and staff are introduced to facilitators from VFST and Austin CAMHS. Through this project students are also introduced to their welfare teams and have the opportunity to connect in a different way to their teachers. The project also recognises the need to improve referral pathways between schools and the service system.

The Student Wellbeing and Cultural Diversity Project has the most impact in schools with high cultural diversity and a willingness to work with outside agencies. The 12-month project is sustained beyond this time through secondary consultation from the CAMHS and through a 'train the trainer' model between teaching staff and agencies.

The project is currently being replicated in the Western Metropolitan Region with the Royal Children's Hospital Mental Health Service, VFST, Broadmeadows Secondary College and language schools and Upfield Primary School.

Further Information

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Understanding the effects of intimate partner violence

Intimate partner violence is responsible for more ill-health and premature death in Victorian women under the age of 45 than any other of the well-known risk factors, including high blood pressure, obesity and smoking (VicHealth 2004).

There is increasing recognition internationally that intimate partner violence is a common problem with serious health, social and economic consequences for women, their families and communities. Women are more vulnerable to intimate partner violence than to violence in any other context (OWP 2002) and are overwhelmingly more likely than men to be the victims of this form of violence (ABS 2003; Bagshaw & Chung 2000).

In 2004, VicHealth and the Department of Human Services worked with researchers, policy makers and practitioners to assess the health impact of intimate partner violence for Victorian women. This work focused on the prevalence of intimate partner violence, the health problems it causes and its contribution to the total disease burden in Victorian women.

The results, published in *The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence: A summary of findings* (VicHealth 2004), demonstrate that intimate partner violence is:

- Prevalent—one in five women report being subjected to violence at some time in their adult lives (ABS 1996a).
- Serious—intimate partner violence has wide-ranging and persistent effects on women's physical and mental health. It contributes 9 per cent to the total disease burden in Victorian women aged 15–44 with 60 per cent of this burden attributed to mental ill health. It is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15–44.

- Preventable—while the causes of violence are complex, evidence from around the world suggests that cultural, social and economic factors play a role. A significant underlying factor is the unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women (WHO 2002; OWP 2002).

There is consensus internationally that intimate partner violence is best addressed in a human rights, legal and health context and through the development of multi-level strategies across sectors (WHO 2002; OWP 2002). In Victoria, this approach is coordinated through the whole-of-government Women's Safety Strategy and intimate partner violence is identified as a priority in the Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

To access a copy of *The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence*, visit: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au or call VicHealth on (03) 9667 1333.

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beyondblue: tackling depression in the workplace

In the workplace, depression accounts for 3–4 days off work per month for each person experiencing depression—that's more than six million lost working days each year in Australia.

beyondblue's National Depression in the Workplace Program addresses the need for organisations to be better informed and equipped to appropriately and effectively manage depression and anxiety-related illnesses.

The workplace program outlines the common signs and symptoms of depression and shows people how to tell if a work colleague may be depressed. It demonstrates how to respond and how to assist the person in accessing appropriate care. A *beyondblue* accredited trainer can either train staff directly or train specific staff to deliver the program across the organisation.

beyondblue CEO, Ms Leonie Young, said: 'One of the aims of the workplace program is to draw attention to the personal, social and economic cost of depression. We also want people to understand that depression is an illness, effective treatments are available and people with depression can't just 'snap out of it'. More than a million people in Australia experience depression, anxiety or related substance use disorders each year and research indicates that each untreated employee will cost their organisation nearly \$10,000 per year.'

beyondblue Deputy CEO, Dr Nicole Highet, who developed the workplace training program, said that depression and associated substance misuse are typically not well managed in the workplace. 'Common practices, such as recommending time off work or a holiday, can often make the situation worse. Failure to treat the illness can increase its duration and severity, leading to high

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beyondblue: tackling depression in the workplace continued from page 6...

absenteeism, lost productivity and an increased risk of suicide,' she said.

A survey of people who participated in the program found it produced:

- increased awareness and knowledge about depression and related disorders
- reduced stigma and absenteeism
- increased confidence to recognise, assist and manage depression and related disorders in the workplace
- increased willingness to assist and support colleagues to access appropriate health care.

Dr Hight said: 'Organisations that have implemented the *beyondblue* Workplace Program find that the outcomes lead to increased recovery, reduced absenteeism, increased production and reduced costs to the organisation'.

Failure to treat the illness can increase its duration and severity, leading to high absenteeism, lost productivity and an increased risk of suicide

Since its inception in 2000, *beyondblue's* national leadership role in raising awareness of depression has contributed significantly to reducing stigma and improving community understanding that depression is a serious health problem.

beyondblue works in partnership with health services, schools, workplaces, universities, media, community organisations and people living with depression, to bring together their collective expertise on depression.

beyondblue—opening our eyes to depression across Australia

Further information

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Health Promotion in DHS... spotlight on Primary and Community Health Branch

Health Promotion Strategies aims to make it easier to understand the roles and responsibilities in health promotion by bringing you information from across the Department of Human Services. In each edition we will feature a different area of the department relevant to health promotion. This edition introduces the Primary and Community Health Branch.

Integrated health promotion is about consolidating and enhancing health promotion effort to support communities and individuals to improve their health and wellbeing. Integrated health promotion is central to the development of a strong and effective primary health system and is a major goal of the Primary and Community Health Branch of the Department of Human Services' Rural, Regional Health and Aged Care Services Division.

The branch's overall goal is:

To improve the health and wellbeing of Victorians, particularly those with or at risk of poorest health status, by developing strong, effective and modern primary and community health services as a valued and key part of Victoria's health care system.

To achieve this goal, the branch provides funds to community and women's health agencies and Primary Care Partnerships to support integrated health promotion targeting locally determined priorities.

Reflecting its commitment to integrated health promotion in primary care services, the branch has a number of staff with dedicated health promotion responsibilities. These staff have been responsible for a series of important health promotion initiatives over the last few years, including:

- the development of integrated health promotion catchment planning by Primary Care Partnerships
- implementation of a standard planning and reporting framework for community and women's health

- strengthening of evaluation skills across the primary health sector.

The branch has also led the production of a number of integrated health promotion tools and resources, such as the *Integrated health promotion resource kit*, the *Impact evaluation guide*, integrated health promotion planning and reporting templates and the Health Promotion website. The branch's Dental Health Team, which is responsible for oral health promotion, is in the final stages of appointing consultants to inform the development of the government's new Victorian Oral Health Promotion Strategy.

David Riley, Manager, Integrated Health Promotion and Planning, believes it is an exciting time for health promotion in the primary health sector and the Primary and Community Health Branch. 'Over the last five years, the branch has renewed its commitment to, and at least tripled its effort in, supporting the provision of effective and integrated health promotion programs in the primary health sector. And the sector has responded in kind, increasing its collaborative and targeted effort to improve the health of whole communities, 'at risk' groups and people with chronic and complex conditions,' he said.

'To quote from the Community Health Services policy document—we **are** creating a healthier Victoria!'

Further Information

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What's on—what's new?

Join the People's Health Movement

Individuals and organisations are invited to contribute to the worldwide struggle for better health by getting involved in the Australian branch of the People's Health Movement (PHM). Visit the PHM Oz website to find out about current activities and advocacy work.

Further information

www.phmoz.org
Enquiries: info@phmoz.org

Mental Health Research Series

VicHealth's research summaries disseminate data on the impact of mental health problems and links between a variety of factors and mental health and wellbeing. The data was gathered with support from the Sydney Health Projects Group to assist the development of VicHealth's *Mental Health Promotion Plan 2005-2007*.

Summaries available include:

1. Burden of disease due to mental illness and mental health problems
2. Social inclusion as a determinant of mental health and wellbeing
3. Discrimination and violence as determinants of mental health and wellbeing
4. Access to economic resources as a determinant of mental health and wellbeing

To download publications, visit www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/MHWU/

Mental health promotion evidence-based resource

The Public Health Group, Department of Human Services, has commissioned

VicHealth and Deakin University to produce a mental health promotion evidence-based resource for practitioners. The resource will be based on a comprehensive review of the literature and will summarise what is known about the most effective intervention approaches.

The resource will help practitioners identify:

- effective strategies for prevention of illness and promotion of mental health
- innovative strategies that show promise of success
- research gaps in mental health promotion and prevention.

The review will be finalised in the next few months.

Further information

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The Men's Shed

The Men's Shed project, a Hepburn Health Service initiative, provides a place for guys doing it tough in the community. This includes men who have been isolated because of their socioeconomic status and who are at a disadvantage because of age and health issues.

The Men's Shed promotes wellbeing by providing a safe environment where men can relate and share a bit of themselves, while engaging in activities and projects.

Further information

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2005 Public Health Awards

The submission round for the 2005 Victorian Public Health Awards will open soon. For further information email spiro.iliopoulos@dhs.vic.gov.au or to obtain a nomination form, visit the website: www.health.vic.gov.au/publichealthawards

Evaluation of evidence based reviews

Since 1999 the department has produced a series of evidence based health promotion resources based on health issues or population groups. These resources are available at www.health.vic.gov.au/healthpromotion/quality/evidence_index.htm

If you have used the department's evidence based resources and are interested in participating in an evaluation of the health promotion evidence based review program, please contact Dr Helen Keleher on tel: (03) 9244 6688 or email: helen.keleher@deakin.edu.au.

About this Publication

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Contributions for future editions of this bulletin are most welcome. Articles on physical activity, to appear in the August 2005 edition, are due by 29 July.

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