

Integrated health promotion is making a difference

A PCP practical example: Barwon PCP (now G21 Health & Wellbeing Pillar)

READ the PLAY

“READ the PLAY” was initiated by a local business (Kempe Engineering) due to concerns regarding the mental health of young people in the community. In line with the health promotion priority of promoting mental health and wellbeing, Barwon PCP provided support for the project through their drought initiative in conjunction with their member agency General Practitioners Association of Geelong. Various community organisations, including many PCP member agencies were approached and a steering committee developed. Representatives from Kempe Group, General Practitioners Association of Geelong, Geelong Junior Football, Victoria Police, City of Greater Geelong, Geelong and District Football and Netball League, Bellarine Football and Netball league, Barwon Health, Barwon Health Foundation, headspace Barwon and Leisure Networks comprised the committee.

In December 2006, the steering committee contracted ORYGEN Training and Development to develop and deliver a mental health literacy program to local football and netball clubs.

The aims of READ the PLAY were to increase knowledge about local support services, explore attitudes towards mental health problems and seeking help, increase knowledge and awareness of mental health problems and alcohol and drug use, increase confidence and skills to respond to young people with mental health problems and increase confidence and skills in guiding youth in the clubs to relevant support services.

The program was launched in March 2007 and rolled out in May 2007 and May 2008. The program in 2008 was altered in response to feedback from participants. In response to this feedback mental health clinicians were utilized as mentors to the participants and the participants were provided with a resource in the form of a mental health quiz, which was, designed to be user friendly and appropriate to the targeted age group to take back to their clubs.

What is the integrated health promotion response?

Thirty-four clubs in the three local football and netball leagues were provided with information regarding READ the PLAY and encouraged to send two club representatives to the training. Representatives of each club (committed volunteers and respected by junior members of the clubs) received the training program. The 8.5-hour training program covers: mental health and young people, mental illness, substance use and mental health, support services and help-seeking, looking after yourself and ongoing support and resources.

A Club Presidents evening was held to gain support for the program and for the club representatives undertaking the training.

Read the Play targeted U/16 footballers and U/15 netballers in the local leagues. The club representatives provided a brief “mental health quiz”, which was designed to be fun, interactive and educational to the players.

What are the impacts?

In 2007, 40 club representatives participated in the Read the Play training, last year there were 39, and in 2009 there will be approximately 45 youth being trained across 34 clubs.

These representatives have taken the skills from the training and conducted 'in house' sessions to pass on skills and information to junior members within each of their respective clubs.

The program was evaluated using a standardized tool that measures improvement in knowledge regarding mental health and mental illness and knowledge regarding seeking help and local mental health services. The evaluation is utilized pre course, following training and at a 6-month follow-up.

Evaluation results concluded that training programs delivered within sporting settings appear to be effective in improving mental health literacy.

Evaluation results showed that Read the Play training has been successful in improving knowledge about and attitudes towards mental illness. The biggest changes found were in the participants' knowledge of relevant services for youth with mental health problems. As a result, club representatives are now better equipped with the resources needed to identify and support at-risk youth in their sporting club, which is one of the main goals of Read the Play program

What's next?

The steering committee of Read the Play are now investigating other ways the program can become sustainable and also expand into other sporting settings.

Read the Play will be delivered in the Portland/Glenelg area this year.

It is anticipated that the program will remain sustainable and continue to be implemented in other areas.

Further information

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References

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Headspace See Young People Early training package