

Setting Up a Child and Adolescent ATAPS Service

Issues relevant to providing services for children up to 12 years

Presenter:

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Importance of funding and early intervention for child services

- ▶ **Australian epidemiological data shows that 16-20% of children aged 4-11 years experienced mental health problems in past 6 months (Zubrick 1995)**
- ▶ **Mental health problems in childhood and adolescence strongly predictive of poor mental health and social outcomes later in life**
- ▶ **Evidence based recommendations for early intervention in the development of childhood disorders with a focus on prevention strategies**



Systemic nature of the treatment

- ▶ **Understanding of child problems in family context**
- ▶ **Need for family based models of intervention**
- ▶ **Importance of strengthening attachment system**
- ▶ **Practical implications:**
 - ▶ **Logistics of inviting entire family to initial assessment**
 - ▶ **Longer time for assessment (90 minutes)**
 - ▶ **Full waiting room, possible need for interpreters**
 - ▶ **Requires greater commitment by parents**
 - ▶ **Addressing family dynamics, parents' own mental health or safety issues (eg., DV) requires > 6 sessions**
 - ▶ **Need for family work not addressed by Medicare system**



Collaborative care model

- ▶ **Providers working together ensures best outcome**
- ▶ **Need to liaise with other professionals to assess functioning in other settings, share clinical information, plan/co-ordinate care**
- ▶ **Lots of phone tag, reception staff taking messages**
- ▶ **Model of up to 7 patients per day as per adult work doesn't fit**
- ▶ **Importance of appropriate GP referrals and adequate funding/staff cover for this age group**



Other issues in setting up a service

- ▶ **Child friendly premises:**
 - ▶ **Waiting room with pictures, books, toys**
 - ▶ **Check for dangerous items or escape routes!**
 - ▶ **Small table and chairs**
 - ▶ **Drawing materials**
 - ▶ **Change table in patient toilet**
 - ▶ **Staff acceptance of food, other mess and noise factor**













Other issues in setting up a service

- ▶ **Risk management and reporting child protection concerns:**
 - ▶ **Mental health symptoms are often indicators of child abuse or neglect**
 - ▶ **Clinicians as mandated reporters for suspicion of all forms of abuse and neglect and also children not attending school**
 - ▶ **Need access to Keeping Them Safe website**
 - ▶ **No access to Child Wellbeing Unit for NGOs**
 - ▶ **Outcome of clinicians reporting to Community Services**
 - ▶ **Ethics of when counselling is appropriate**



Other issues in setting up a service

- ▶ **Established policy on writing medicolegal reports (risk of getting caught up in custody battles)**
- ▶ **Selection and ordering of standardised measures for children with clinical cut-off scores**
- ▶ **Storage for medical records (must be kept until patient is 25 years of age)**



Staff qualifications

- ▶ **Assessment and treatment of child mental health problems (Social work, Psychology)**
- ▶ **Ability to engage with children and their families (including parents with their own mental health problems)**
- ▶ **Skills in providing family interventions**
- ▶ **Knowledge of developmental milestones and when to refer for this**
- ▶ **Familiarity with local services**
- ▶ **Certificate for Self Employed People in Child Related Employment (by May 2011, www.kids.nsw.gov.au)**



Links with other services

- ▶ **Specialist children's mental health services:**
 - ▶ Local child, youth and family team for groups, ongoing therapy if needed, history of previous treatment
 - ▶ Local mental health crisis team for risk of harm to self or others
 - ▶ Awareness of tertiary referral services if family or other admission required
 - ▶ Network of private child psychiatrists GPs can refer to
- ▶ **Schools:**
 - ▶ Liaison with school counsellors, learning support teachers
 - ▶ Requests for diagnostic funding reports
 - ▶ Need to attend occasional school based meetings

