

Health • Promotion • Service

SOUTH EASTERN SYDNEY AREA HEALTH SERVICE

Working Together - A Milestone for Health and Schools

The launch of new 'Working Together' protocols for health and schools is a major achievement for workers in the field as it's the first time clear directions on managing the complexities of school health have been provided in south eastern Sydney.

The School Health Protocols were developed by the Area School Health Committee and completed in October this year.

"Both health workers and teachers are delighted to have a resource that helps to navigate a complicated health system and supports schools to understand what health can offer," Polly Price, Co-ordinator of the Health Promoting Schools team said.

"For nearly 100 years child and family health school nurses have fulfilled a vital role in supporting the health of school children. Speech, dental and occupational therapists, child and family counsellors and health promotion staff have also provided valuable services. This document brings together a list of all the groups working in schools and the best ways to go about addressing health issues," Polly said.

The Protocols outline how health service providers and school staff can:

- ▶ **establish the appropriateness of a health intervention;**
- ▶ **identify key people to assist;**
- ▶ **establish agreement within and between the health and education sectors to work together;**
- ▶ **comply with relevant health and education policies and cross-sectoral procedures; and**
- ▶ **ensure that OHS obligations are met.**

The 'Working Together' protocols are relevant to people working in health promotion, health education, community development, screening, therapy, counselling or any other school related intervention.

Yet another policy document?

Many Area Health employees working with the education sector had identified a need for guidelines to bring the two sectors together to improve practice.

"The protocols fulfil the need to identify best practice principles for working with schools," Polly Price said. "While we as health workers may see schools as a captive audience for health interventions, health outcomes are not the core business of schools. For their part, teachers often request one-off classroom presentations from health staff on particular topics. This practice is not ideal for health or educational outcomes and are often a waste of resources."

Long term work in the field of school health has shown that comprehensive programs that use a number of strategies - in the classroom, in the school environment as well as with parents and the community - are more likely to lead to health gains.



The Area School Health Committee was formed in 2002 with key partners from health; the State, Catholic and Independent sectors of education; and non-government organisations.

As well as the Working Together protocols the Area School Health Committee has developed a directory of health services for schools; a database of current school health projects and supported professional development for teachers on health issues. *



In consolidating our strategies to increase the intensity and impact of interventions that improve the health of the population Health Promotion is applying for \$5.25M

to address childhood obesity. NSW Health's ASSIST Program (Area-based Services Strategic Implementation Support Trials) will increase the per capita funding for chronic disease. South East Health is

working with Illawarra on a joint submission due in early 2005.

The Health Promotion Annual Review 2003/ 2004 is now available. If you would like to receive a copy please contact me.

We'd like to wish our partners, colleagues and friends a very Merry Christmas and prosperity for the year ahead.

Best regards

Jo Mitchell
Director of Health Promotion

The Health Promoting Schools Team

The Health Promoting Schools team work in a variety of ways with schools. As well as supporting the Area School Health Committee, current projects include:

- Fit to Learn: working with two high schools in the St George District, Fit to Learn aims to increase physical activity and water consumption among students (see October issue of the South Easterly).
- School Health Incentive Project (SHIP): since 2000 SHIP has supported over 70 schools with 103 small grants to work on a wide

variety of health issues such as nutrition, physical activity, anti-bullying, social skills and sexual health using the Health Promoting Schools framework. Case studies from the 2003 round and copies of the SHIP protocols are available from Polly Price at pricepo@sesahs.nsw.gov.au *



Regina Coeli Catholic Primary School students enjoy the playground upgrades supported by a SHIP grant.

Health Promotion at the Migrant Information Day

Smoke Free Homes: Hurstville Smoke Free Homes, a community-based project which aims to reduce active and passive smoking among the Chinese community was part of the St George Migrant Information Day in October.

The Migrant Information Day is organised by the St George Migrant Resource Centre and was attended by over 800 people.

Over 70 Chinese community members visited the Smoke Free Homes stall to ask about quitting smoking and environmental tobacco smoke.

“People commented that the resources available such as Smoke Free Zone key rings and fridge magnets would help them initiate a discussion with smoking family members and friends on not smoking around young children,” Brenda Leung, Smoke Free Homes project officer said.

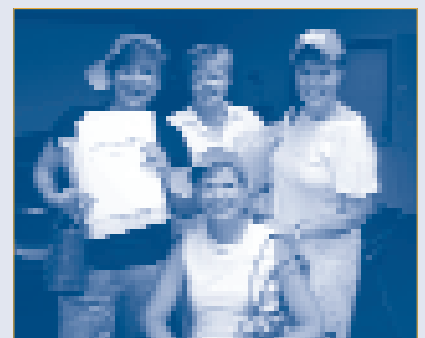
SHARE, a gentle exercise provider partly funded by Health Promotion also attended St George Migrant Information Day to promote Chinese and Arabic exercise classes. The classes are run by bi-lingual qualified fitness instructors in Ashfield, Hurstville, Strathfield and Canterbury.

SHARE recently celebrated 20 years of incorporation at their AGM in October. For more information on gentle exercise classes for older people contact SHARE on 9533 4422. *

Happenings

- Australian Health Promotion Association 15th Annual Conference 20 | 20 VISION - 20 years since Ottawa, 20 years from now Canberra, March 13 - 16 2005. For inquiries email: ahpa@confco.com.au
- Fourteen St George area pharmacist/ pharmacy assistants attended the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (NSW)- accredited ‘helping smokers quit’ seminar organised by the Health Promotion Service on December 1.

Evaluation shows that participants would use the knowledge and skills learnt from Dr Yeo’s presentation on how pharmacists can assist smokers to quit.



Participants at the workshop

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