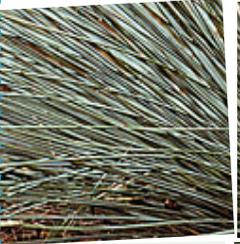
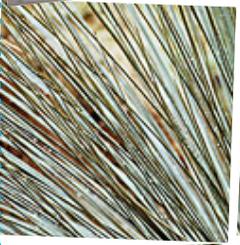


Supporting recovery for children and young people

For parents/carers

Every
child,
every
opportunity



The 2009 Victorian bushfires have had an impact on many people across Victoria, both directly and indirectly. Children and young people are particularly vulnerable and can respond to traumatic events such as the bushfires in a variety of ways. Parents and carers play a significant role in children and young people's lives and provide support, advice and guidance throughout the healing process.



This brochure provides information about accessing specialised external support for your child to complement the support provided in kindergarten or school settings. A detailed version of this brochure is also available online at www.education.vic.gov.au/about/bushfires/support/parents.htm.

Working in partnership: kindergartens, schools and families

There are a variety of support staff within kindergartens and schools. These include early childhood professionals, teachers, Student Welfare Coordinators, Student Support Services Officers, Primary Welfare Officers, school nurses and chaplains. Each can provide support, advice and information about children and young people who are experiencing difficulties or having problems.

Student Support Services Officers (SSSO) in schools

Student Support Services Officers provide specialist support and assistance to children and young people. If needed, Student Support Services Officers can work closely with you, your child and community based health and support services to ensure that your child has access to appropriate levels of support at the right time. Some children and young people may require an additional level of support from mental health professionals that can be accessed outside the kindergarten or school setting. SSSOs can provide you with information on the range of supports that are available to your child outside the kindergarten or school setting.

Allied health professionals

Allied health professionals can provide support to your child outside the kindergarten or school setting. Allied health professionals include social workers, psychologists, mental health nurses, occupational therapists and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers with specific mental health qualifications.

Who may benefit from some specialised support?

Each child or young person will have a unique response to a traumatic event. There are differences in the length of time it takes individuals to begin the process of recovery and there is no 'one way' that children and young people will respond and work through feelings such as sadness, anger, grief or loss. However, there are some behaviours that children and young people may exhibit that are concerning and should be discussed with your GP, your Maternal and Child Health Nurse, your Bushfire Case Manager or your child's kindergarten or school welfare staff. These include:

- Feeling anxious, fearful or distressed
- Experiencing physical discomfort, including problems eating, sleeping or toileting
- Having difficulty concentrating or behaving impulsively
- Nightmares or bed-wetting
- Behaviour problems (such as aggression or anger) that disrupt your child's development or adjustment at home or at school
- Having difficulty with relationships within the family and/or with their friends
- Refusing to attend kindergarten or school
- Anxiety about safety or separation from you

What services are available in my local community?

There are a range of specialised support services available in bushfire affected communities, including community health centres, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, drug and alcohol support services and allied health professionals.

There are also a number of telephone support services available to provide support, counselling, information and referrals, including:

Parentline 13 22 89

Kids Helpline 1800 551 800

Maternal and Child Health Line 13 22 29

Lifeline 13 11 14

Mensline 1300 789 978

**Australian Centre for Grief
and Bereavement** 1300 664 786

Relationships Australia 1300 364 277

Directline (drug and alcohol support)
1800 888 236

Youth Substance Abuse Service
(drug and alcohol support for young people
aged between 12 and 21) 1800 014 446

DEECD has developed information brochures about the specific support services available in each of the fire-affected local government areas. These brochures are online at www.education.vic.gov.au/about/bushfires/support/parents.htm

Children and young people accessing support from allied health professionals

To access specialised support for your child from an allied health professional, you need to get a referral from your GP or Bushfire Case Manager. Make an appointment to discuss your child's needs with your GP or Bushfire Case Manager, who will work with you and your child (if appropriate) to develop a Mental Health Care Plan. There will be no cost for referrals to allied health professionals for people affected by the bushfires under the Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) component of the Better Outcomes in Mental Health program.

Bushfire Psychological Counselling Voucher Program

The Bushfire Psychological Counselling Voucher Program will provide people affected by the bushfires with up to six counselling sessions at any time over the next two years through a specially designed voucher system. Individual, couple or family counselling may be accessed through this program. For additional information on this program see www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal/Fund-Payments/support-payments/psychological-support-package .

