

Supporting recovery for staff

**For Maternal and Child Health Nurses,
Early Childhood Professionals,
School Staff and Student Support
Services Officers**

The 2009 Victorian bushfires have had an impact on many people across Victoria, both directly and indirectly. Maternal and Child Health Nurses, early childhood professionals, school staff, Primary Welfare Officers and Student Support Services Officers play a vital role in providing support, advice and guidance to children and young people throughout the healing process following a traumatic event. However, it is important that you look after your own mental and physical health and wellbeing and develop long term self care strategies that work for you. You may decide that you need support from an allied health professional to work through your own feelings and emotions.

The immediate affects of stress and grief should not necessarily be treated as an illness, but rather a normal part of the healing process, requiring time and the support of others. There are considerable differences in the length of time it takes, and the amount of pain that is experienced, before we regain some balance in our lives. There is no 'one way' to overcome these feelings. People and circumstances vary enormously and, consequently, so does the process of recovery and adapting to new circumstances.

This brochure provides information for early childhood professionals, Maternal and Child Health Nurses, school staff, Primary Welfare Officers and Student Support Services Officers about accessing support from allied health professionals through the Better Outcomes in Mental Health program and the Bushfire Counselling Voucher program run by the Department of Human Services. A shortened version of this brochure is also available online at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/bushfires/support/schools.htm>.

What services are available in local communities?

There are a range of specialised support services available in bushfire affected communities, including community health centres, drug and alcohol support services and private allied health professionals. There are also a number of telephone support services available to provide support, counselling, information and referrals, including:

- **DEECD Employee Assistance program** 1800 337 068
- **NURSE-ON-CALL Bushfire Health and Counselling Line** 1300 60 60 24
- **Lifeline** 13 11 14
- **Mensline** 1300 789 978
- **Parentline** 13 22 89
- **Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement** 1300 664 786
- **Relationships Australia** 1300 364 277
- **Directline** (drug and alcohol support) 1800 888 236

Early childhood professionals and Maternal and Child Health Nurses should speak to their employer about any specialised support that their employer may be able to provide.

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 <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/bushfires/support/parents.htm>.

Community Health Centres

Community Health Centres provide a wide range of health and community support services which vary from centre to centre. To find a Community Health Centre in your local government area, including a Community Health Centre with counselling or social support services attached, visit

http://www.health.vic.gov.au/communityhealth/service_provider/community_health_directory.htm.



Every
child,
every
opportunity



Community Health Centres

Community Health Centres provide a wide range of health and community support services which vary from centre to centre, including medical, dental, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, nursing, podiatry, community development and liaison, education programs, drug and alcohol support, counselling and casework.

To find a Community Health Centre in your local government area, including a Community Health Centre which offers counselling or social support services, visit

http://www.health.vic.gov.au/communityhealth/service_provider/community_health_directory.htm.

Drug and alcohol support services

There are a range of drug and alcohol support services around Victoria that provide a wide variety of services including outpatient services, drug and alcohol counselling, referrals, withdrawal programs, education programs, self help or drug users group and assessment. To access a drug and alcohol support services in your local government area, you can speak to your GP, local Community Health Centre or your Bushfire Case Manager. Alternatively, you can search for a service online at <http://www.vicdrugguide.org.au/> or <http://www.aodservices.net.au/>.

Allied health professionals

Allied health professionals are social workers, psychologists, mental health nurses, occupational therapists and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers with specific mental health qualifications

Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care program

The Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) component of the Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care program enables those individuals that have been diagnosed with a mental illness or who are experiencing persisting psychological symptoms as a result of the bushfires to access specialised mental health services provided by an allied health professional.

Specialised support from allied health professionals

Who can access support from an allied health professional?

Any person who has a Medicare card (including a temporary Medicare card) and has been directly affected by the Victorian bushfires can seek a referral from their GP or Bushfire Case Manager to an allied health professional.

What happens if I don't have a GP or a Bushfire Case Manager?

If you don't have a Bushfire Case Manager you need to register with the Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service by calling 1800 050 400 or by speaking to staff at your local Community Service Hub.

If you don't have a GP you can speak to your Bushfire Case Manager or contact your local Division of General Practice. Contact details for local Divisions of General Practice can be found above.

How much will it cost to access support from an allied health professional?

Under the Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) component of the Better Outcomes in Mental Health program, there will be no cost for referrals to or services provided by allied health professionals for people affected by the bushfires.

In some cases, it may be more appropriate for you be referred to an allied health professional registered under the Better Access in Mental Health program. These allied health professionals may also provide free services for people affected by the bushfires, however some services may charge a small co-payment. You will need to check with your GP or Bushfire Case Manager to determine what co-payment (if any) will be charged.

Can I choose the allied health professional I want to be referred to?

This may be possible, but talk to your GP or Bushfire Case Manager before they make the referral.

If you are already seeing an allied health professional privately you can still seek a referral from your GP or Bushfire Case Manager. Wherever possible, GPs and Bushfire Case Managers will try to ensure that you continue to work with the same allied health professional if that is your wish. However, your current allied health professional will need to be registered as a provider with either the Better Outcomes in Mental Health program or Better Access in Mental Health program in order for your child to access free (or low cost) services.

Bushfire Psychological Counselling program

The Bushfire Psychological Counselling program will provide people affected by the bushfires with up to six counselling sessions at anytime over the next two years through a specially designed voucher system. Individual, couple or family counselling may be accessed through this program. You do not need to seek a referral from your GP or Bushfire Case Manager to access counselling vouchers. For additional information on the Bushfire Psychological Counselling Voucher program see <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal/Fund-Payments/support-payments/psychological-support-package>