

NSW SCHOOL-LINK INITIATIVE



Health

NSW School-Link is a long standing statewide initiative being implemented by NSW Health, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in partnership with the Department of Education (DoE). This partnership is formalised by a memorandum of understanding.

School-Link provides the capacity for NSW Health and the Department of Education (DoE) to work together to improve the mental health, wellbeing and resilience of children and young people in NSW.

School-Link is a statewide function of specialist NSW Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and provides specialist mental health services through consultation liaison, clinical care planning for recovery and the delivery of specialist mental health individual and group interventions in schools.

School-Link Coordinators collaborate with education professionals to improve the early identification of students experiencing mental health problems and link students with the care they need. They also play a key role in suicide prevention activities in schools, and assist schools to manage challenging behaviours related to complex mental health issues such as self-harm and suicidal ideation through initiatives such as Project Air for Schools.

School-Link Coordinators are key to the implementation of the *NSW School-Link Strategy and Action Plan 2014-2017* which directs focus to the following areas:

- Early identification of mental health issues
- Access to evidence-informed mental health early intervention programs in schools and TAFEs
- Early access to specialist mental health services
- Support for the recovery journey

Funding for Mental Health Reform in 2017/18

Under the NSW Government's response to *Living Well: A Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW 2014-2024*, three new School-Link positions were funded in Illawarra Shoalhaven LHD (Shellharbour and Nowra), South West Sydney LHD (Campbelltown and Camden) and Hunter New England LHD (Newcastle or Maitland/Cessnock).

In 2017/18, a further three School-Link Coordinator positions are being funded to strengthen the links between DoE Networked Specialist Centres, school counsellors and clinical mental health services in the community for children and adolescents. The positions will increase capacity in locations with high need. New positions are being funded in:

- Western Sydney LHD (Mt Druitt/Parramatta)
- Mid North Coast LHD (Port Macquarie); and
- Northern NSW LHD (Lismore)

The School-Link Initiative works across approximately 3,000 NSW schools and TAFEs in partnership with teachers, school counsellors and specialist mental health staff. School-Link has been shown to equip school and TAFE staff to more confidently identify and manage emerging mental health issues in their students and to strengthen their understanding of where to refer young people for the help they need.

To learn more about mental health care reform in NSW visit

www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/reform

