

Adolescent early intervention services: better mental health for rural adolescents

Trevor Marshall, Ruth Mulligan, Robert Taylor, Lisa Neville, Matt Taylor, Emma Ghys

Alpine Health, VIC

Introduction: In 2001 Alpine Health established an Adolescent Early Intervention Service as a consequence of a significant number of referrals being made to the regional Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMH Service). There were long delays between a young person being referred to the CAMH Service and being assessed, which often exacerbated the issues that were presenting for that young person.

The Alpine Shire is a rural area divided into two main valleys, which have a significant influence on the movement of the population in the area. The Ovens Valley population (comprising Bright and Myrtleford) mainly uses Wangaratta as its regional centre outside of the shire, while the Kiewa Valley population (comprising Mount Beauty) mainly travel to the Albury/Wodonga region for their specialist health care. These main centres are 50-100 kilometres outside the Alpine Shire

Aim: To meet the mental health and wellbeing needs of young people through the establishment and delivery of locally accessible youth services.

Method: This aim has been met through the development of the following positions:

- adolescent health worker
- two health promotion officers
- youth worker.

Results: The outcomes that have been achieved through the combined delivery of these services over the past ten years have included:

- between 2005/10 the Psychiatric Hospitalisation rate has reduced from 10.2% per 1000 adolescent population to 6.5% per 1000 adolescent population. (VCAMS Portal)
- full time school participation at aged 16 years in 2011 was 89.7% in the Alpine Shire which is an increase from 2006 of 81%
- reduction of intentional self-harm as evidence through the data reporting of VCAMS Portal

- increased engagement of young people in local activities and decision making e.g. Youth Council, Youth Clubs and Communities that Care.

Conclusions: The positions have worked closely together in addressing the health and wellbeing of young people in the Alpine Shire. Through a strong partnership approach with other key stakeholders we have seen:

- reduced waiting times to access specialist mental health services
- reduced risk factors and delays in responding to young people's needs
- local service provision—out of the 'Mental Health System'
- reduced stigma of having a mental health issue
- greater access to positive health and wellbeing advice
- greater responsiveness and earlier intervention reducing the escalation of issues and conditions
- capacity building within the schools and the community to identify and respond appropriately to health and wellbeing of young people.