

a guide for schools

Schools as Communities

healthy children



supported families



stronger communities



dhcs | ACT
community partners

About us

Schools as Communities is an ACT Government program that works in identified ACT preschools and primary schools to promote positive outcomes for families and children.

Specifically, the program seeks to improve the social, emotional and developmental outcomes for children and families who are vulnerable, by helping to identify and address potential issues as early as possible.

Priority groups for the program are those children at risk of abuse and neglect, and those with emerging family based difficulties which could result in poorer social, emotional and developmental outcomes for children.

The program supports families and children by creating strong and effective working relationships between families, communities and their schools and working together to develop projects, activities or events in schools and the local area.

Schools as Communities, along with the Child and Family Centres, ParentLink, Parents as Teachers and the Integrated Family Support Project form the Early Intervention and Prevention Unit in the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS).

The program

The Schools as Communities program consists of:

- skilled professionals working across a number of schools with children and their families (Schools as Communities workers)
- strategic projects—developing and funding programs and projects across the ACT community to enhance partnerships between families, communities, schools, local business and government.

Schools as Communities is a voluntary program and parents' consent is required before a Schools as Communities worker can work with a child.



Objectives

The objective of the program is to form strong linkages between schools, their local community, community service agencies, and businesses that share an interest in establishing sustainable programs that support children, young people and their families. These partnerships, collaborations and linkages are an essential aspect in enhancing community capacity.



Principles

- The early years of a child's life are critical in ensuring their long-term social, emotional and developmental wellbeing. Intervention early in the child's life has the most long-term benefits for children, families and the community.
- Families have the greatest impact on a child's development and growth. This means that programs need to work with families as well as children.
- Parents and other caregivers need support and resources to acquire skills and knowledge to enable their children to reach their full potential, particularly where children are from socially and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.
- School-linked and school-based services provide a best-fit for service delivery for preschool and school-aged children and their parents.
- Every community has strengths that can be mobilised to enhance community living and capacity.



Priorities

- Children whose social, emotional and developmental outcomes are compromised or could be compromised due to identified risk factors are supported to reach their full potential.
- Schools are supported to become access points for information about services.
- Schools, communities and business work together to build community capacity and develop partnerships which will strengthen families and the community as a whole.
- The capacity of children and their families is strengthened by their participation in evidence-based programs.



The role of schools as

School as Communities workers connected to schools will identify the needs of children and families in their school community.

In line with the purpose, principles and priorities of the program—the worker, school, families and other key stakeholders will work together to promote the social, emotional and developmental outcomes of children at risk, and their families.

The role of the worker will have a strong focus on:

1 Identifying children whose social and emotional development is compromised or could be compromised due to identified risk factors.

Workers will:

- have a regular presence within the school where they will be available to meet with families
- develop strong relationships with school staff to promote appropriate referrals to the program
- attend special needs meetings at negotiated times throughout the school term.

2 Engaging with identified families to assess the needs of their children and provide or link them with appropriate services.

Workers will:

- engage with families and develop supportive relationships in order to assess and provide them with access to appropriate services
- undertake goal-orientated work with children and their families
- liaise with agencies that can support families to provide coordinated services to families
- work within the case management framework and other clinical policies and practices of the Early Intervention and Prevention Unit.

Communities workers

3 Provision of group work programs to children and their families.

- Programs will be provided that are research and evidence based and where a need is identified within the school or pod of schools.
- Group programs will be delivered from a core suite of identified programs that aim to improve children's social and emotional development or parenting capacity.
- Groups may be delivered to students or their parents.
- Programs may be provided at the school, local venue or Child and Family Centres.

4 Participate as a member of the school community in community development activities and projects.

- Together with schools, community and business, develop specific initiatives to assist identified priority groups.
- Provide a range of community services for children and their families from the school.
- Develop and maintain better links and referral pathways between schools and community agencies.





Contact us

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