

Bridging the chasm- an exploration of the challenges for practitioners working with parental substance misuse where child protection concerns exist.

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**Government
of South Australia**

SA Health



Overview

Objectives of presentation

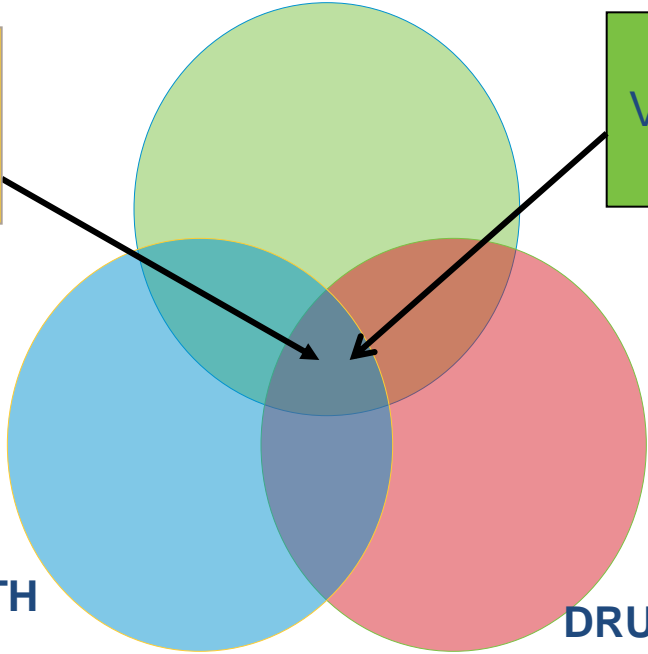
1. Outline the practice challenges
2. Discuss recent South Australian policy developments and current practice initiatives
3. Overview of future plans



**CHILD PROTECTION AND
FAMILY WELLBEING ISSUES**

**Staff
managing
risk**

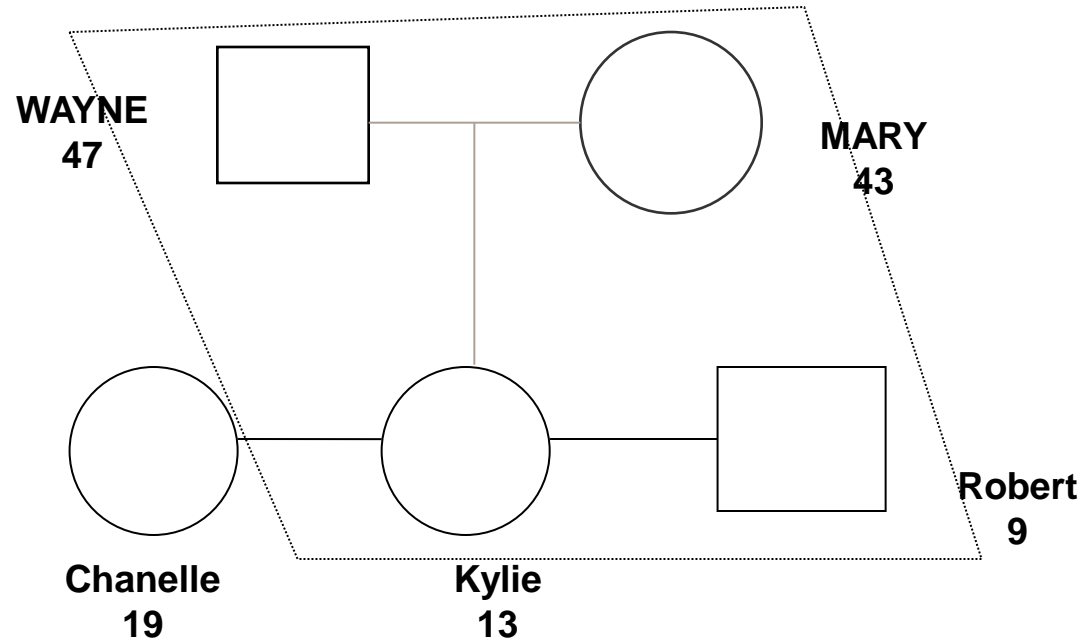
**Highly
Vulnerable
families**



**MENTAL HEALTH
ISSUES**

**DRUG AND ALCOHOL
ISSUES**

Meet the Mortons





What is different for parents with co-morbid issues?

- > Represent large proportion of families coming into contact with statutory Child Protection Services.
- > Co-morbidity can have far-reaching implications for individuals capacity to provide a safe environment for children.
- > Co-morbid clients often fall through service gaps and this will have significant implications for children in their care.



Outcomes for workers- the flow on effect

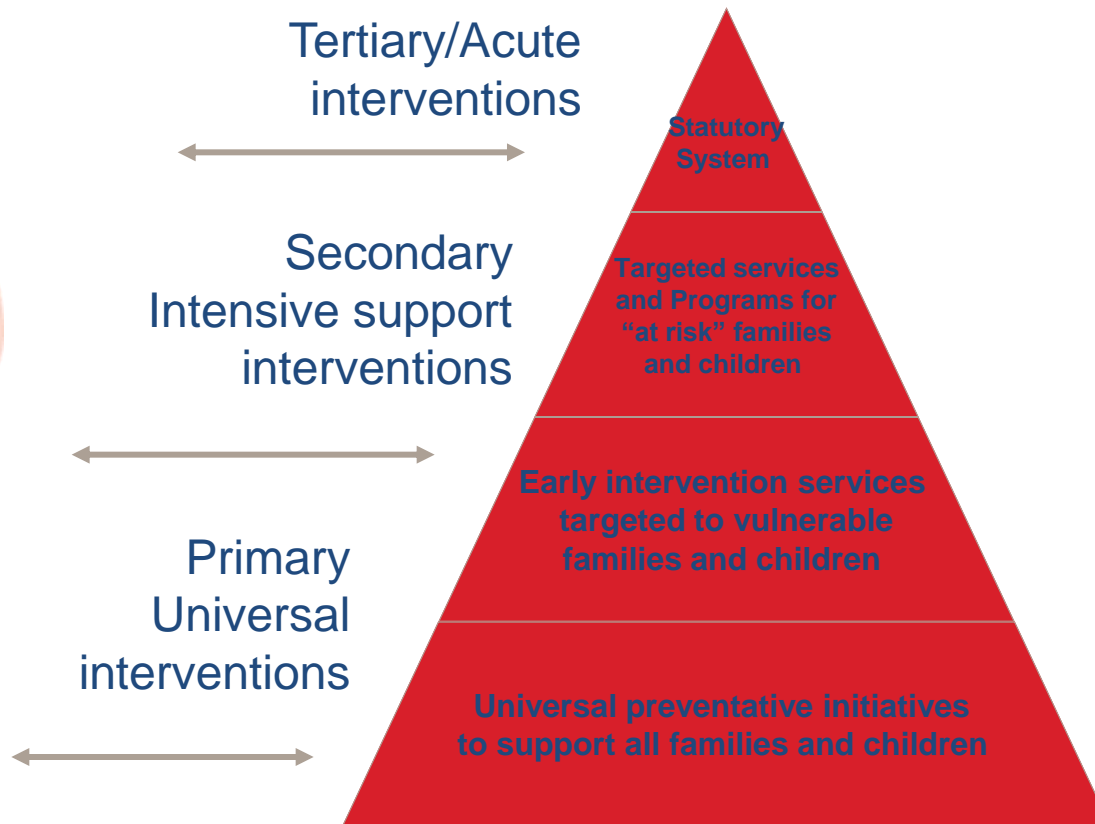
- > Increasing numbers of families presenting to primary health care services with complex issues and child protection concerns.
- > Adult specialist service's staff are working with families who have significant child protection concerns due to parental substance use and/ or mental health- ie DASSA, Adult Mental Health.
- > Many staff feel ill equipped to work with this difficult and chaotic group.



Outcomes for workers contd.

- > Discomfort managing the risk related to child protection concerns.
- > Challenging parents is difficult when you don't feel confident in your own skills or supported by your organisation.
- > Staff believe the service system is fragmented and difficult to negotiate and leaves staff and clients feeling unsure about outcomes.

National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children and the Public Health model.



Ref- Protecting Children is Everyone's business- National Framework, 2009



Key Developments

- > Funding of Kids In Focus program for families impacted by parental substance use.
- > Development of “*Information Sharing Guidelines*” across government and non-government services.
- > Ongoing development of COPMI resources (Children of Parents with a Mental Illness)
- > Development of National Centre for Training on Addiction ‘*For Kids Sake: a workforce development resource for Family Sensitive Policy and Practice in the Alcohol and Other Drugs Sector*’ guidelines



Bridging the Chasm- Where to from here.....

- > Workforce development strategy that reflects the needs of workers.
- > Specialist training and support for workers who work with vulnerable families
- > Policy, procedural support and formal protocols with child protection agencies.
- > Recognition of the level of complexity of involved in working with vulnerable families.
- > Better infusion of innovation.



What can we do differently at a local level?

Work in collaboration

- > Common goal and vision
- > Sharing knowledge, skills and building consensus.

Develop local partnerships

- > Joined up services.
- > Network of support for staff.
- > Common assessment tools



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