

Koori Kids Wellbeing Program

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander KidsMatter Primary Program

OVERVIEW

Age of child:

6 – 12 years

Type of program:

Selective (for specific students who are at risk of developing difficulties)

Targeted (for specific groups of students or for specific students who are experiencing difficulties)

Early intervention (for students who are showing early signs of difficulties)

Topics:

Indigenous cultural identity

Reconciliation

Social and emotional development

Communication skills

School engagement

Parent and carer support

Context:

Child

Family

School

Life events/situations

Community

KidsMatter Components:

Component 2: Social and emotional learning for students

Component 3: Working with parents and carers

Component 4: Helping children with mental health difficulties

Aims to support:

Students
Parents and carers
Educators
Health professionals

IMPLEMENTATION: DELIVERY

Available:

Primary schools in the Shoalhaven region of NSW.

Facilitated by:

Early childhood educators and staff
Primary teachers and staff
Health workers
Allied health professionals

Project Officer- An individual with strong connections with the local community; some background in education and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health; and who is able to facilitate regular group activities, with support from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support staff and Program Counsellor.

Koori Kids Wellbeing Counsellor- An individual with qualifications in psychology or counselling and has experience in education and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

About the program:

- **Aims**

Koori Kids Wellbeing Program aims to support wellbeing and promote mental health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students aged 6-12 years in participating primary schools in the Shoalhaven region of NSW

- **Program structure**

The Koori Kids Wellbeing Program supports the mental health and the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in four different ways:

1. Support for students: During term time, group activities are conducted on a weekly basis. Each session lasts for between 60-90 minutes. Students also have the opportunity to participate in activities during the school holidays. Classroom support and counseling for students happens on an as-needs basis.

2. Support for parents and carers: Program counsellors provide individual and groups support to parents and carers on as-needs basis.

3. Support for schools and educators: Program counsellors provide support and information to schools to better understand and support the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; to offer programs that improve wellbeing; and to link to Aboriginal families and communities as required.

4. Support for services, workers, and health professionals: Program counsellors provide information and support for workers who are working with Aboriginal children experiencing emotional or behaviour difficulties as needed.

- ***Methods of delivery***

For students:

During term time, students attend a weekly group session where, together with the Koori Kids Wellbeing Counsellor, they:

- Debrief about how they found the previous week and discuss any issues, topics or themes that are currently impacting on their mental health and social and emotional wellbeing.
- Participate in a classroom-based, culturally themed arts and crafts activity, often extending over several weeks. Past activities have included NAIDOC day artwork, murals, boomerang artwork, and painting and drawing. Informal group discussion often continues during the arts and crafts activity and can become a forum for problem-solving and brainstorming.
- Participate in a physical outdoor activity, to encourage participation, engagement, and teamwork.

Classroom support and individual counselling is also provided to individual students on an as needs basis.

For parents and carers and families: Counselling and support are available for parents and carers and families when students are experiencing issues impacting their social and emotional wellbeing, or experiencing problems with behaviour or school. Depending on the student and their family situation,

counselling could include a mix of school, home and family counselling support. Support for parents and carers is focused on helping them recognise their strengths, helping them to work with their child's school, and helping them to find support services.

For schools and educators: Includes the provision of information, education and training to help schools understand and support the mental health and social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

For services, workers and health professionals: Includes the provision of information, education and training to help services and workers who are working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students experiencing issues impacting their social and emotional wellbeing. The focus of this support is to help them understand social and emotional wellbeing issues and work in culturally appropriate ways.

Key principles and model:

The Koori Kids Wellbeing Program draws on key principles of spiritual healing, including identity and belonging; and connection to culture, family, community, country and land.

The program also draws on the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), personal goal setting and brief intervention frameworks to support student's mental health and social and emotional wellbeing. The individual and group sessions focus on identifying students' negative thought patterns, attitudes and self-talk and re-framing them in a more positive light. Positive identification and connection with Koori cultures strengthens students' sense of identity and belonging. Positive visualisation, goal setting and projection towards future outcomes helps to develop students' sense of purpose and builds resilience. Development in areas such as self-esteem, assertiveness and problem-solving and conflict resolution skills helps students build their repertoire of coping skills.

Materials needed:

A range of art and craft materials to support weekly group classroom activities for students.

Costs:

Program

Program resources cost approximately \$3000 per annum.

Program administration cost approximately \$10 000 per annum.

Staffing costs

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

Summary of effectiveness:

The Koori Kids Wellbeing Program has been reported to increase mental health outcomes; higher rates of attendance at school; and greater engagement in school activities for students who have participated in the program.

Corroborating evidence:

- **Research based evidence**

None available at this time.

- **Practice based evidence**

Surveys

Attendance records

Feedback from principals

Feedback from parents and carers

AUTHORS/CONTACTS

Author(s):

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About the Author(s):

The South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation works with the Aboriginal community of Shoalhaven to provide a quality culturally appropriate health service, which promotes the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities residing in the region.

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Australian Government

Department of Health

