

EVIDENCE BEHIND THE OUR PLACE ELEMENTS

Wrap-around health and wellbeing services

Executive Summary



ourplace
education is the key to the door

Wrap-around service delivery is an approach that puts the holistic needs of children, young people and their families at the centre, and brings together the wide range of resources, supports and tools that equip them to thrive.

Wrap-around models typically involve collaborations across service systems – for example, connecting education, health, family support, allied health, and employment services, or providing pathways from a universal or ‘soft entry’ point to a range of services for more complex challenges, like housing, family violence, drug and alcohol or mental health services. Health and wellbeing supports can include universal services (like maternal and child health) and secondary services (like access to paediatricians or speech therapists), and often also include referral pathways through to tertiary services (like crisis support).

There is a large and growing body of research that wrap-around service delivery is effective. This paper outlines the evidence on four key areas:

1. Why wrap-around health and wellbeing supports matter.
2. Why schools are well-placed to provide wrap-around support.
3. The services and supports wrap-around schools can provide.
4. What’s required to deliver effective wrap-around service delivery in schools.

1 Why wrap-around health and wellbeing supports matter

Families experiencing disadvantage experience a range of barriers accessing the support and resources they need to thrive. For example, a recent study of barriers to accessing parenting programs identified:

- **Individual barriers.** Poor physical or mental health, negative perceptions of services or fear of stigma and social anxiety, lack of confidence or motivation, lack of time, access to transport.
- **Interpersonal barriers.** Domestic violence, lack of family support, lack of informal support networks, caring responsibilities, multiple and complex issues that limit capacity to engage, social isolation.
- **Program and service barriers.** Accessibility of program (fees, waitlists, locations, program format, timing), inadequate promotion of services, support not aligned to needs, poor staff skills (lack of rapport, prejudiced attitudes), difficult enrolment processes, lack of translators or culturally inappropriate content / approaches.
- **Systemic barriers.** Programs/services not eligible to some visa categories, families whose income is just above Health Care Card thresholds, limits on subsidised sessions (i.e. mental health care plans), legal requirements to report families to child protection, insufficient funding to meet needs (Molloy et al., 2022).



While effective services are known to be individualised and relationship-based, strengths-based and culturally safe, family-centred, multi-systemic, ongoing and able to dial up their intensity proportionate to need, delivering this kind of coordinated support has proven challenging through siloed service systems.

Wrap-around models have been implemented across many service systems, disciplines and contexts. Systematic reviews indicate that, where wrap-around models have been well-implemented, they have been effective in improving access to support, family and community perceptions of the value of support services, perceived quality of support and outcomes for children and families.





2 Why schools are well-placed to provide wrap-around support

Schools play a unique and important role in communities. Research identifies three key benefits of using schools as hubs for wrap-around services:

- **Accessibility:** Schools are part of the community children and families live in, and are usually close to home or easily accessible on public transport. This brings the service to the family and the community (Eber et al., 2011).
- **Reduced stigma:** Delivery of support services through soft entry pathways can normalise help-seeking and reduce stigma (Harbin et al., 2000).
- **Early intervention:** Teachers are well-placed to identify when children would benefit from additional support and connect them to allied health, mental health and other wellbeing services, but when there are strong relationships in place, schools can also play an important role in identifying families that are experiencing challenges and would benefit from support (Whitley & Gooderham, 2016).

Using schools as the hub for wrap-around services has a strong and growing evidence base, with consistent evidence about:

- **Outcomes for children.** Improvements in school attendance and engagement, behaviour and academic achievement.
- **Outcomes for families and the community.** Enhanced social cohesion, improved relationships between parents and teachers, and stronger connections between the school and the wider community.
- **A positive return on investment.** Cost benefit analyses delivering returns of between \$3 and \$15 for every dollar invested.



3 The services and supports wrap-around schools can provide

In addition to the evidence of impact for students, families and communities, there is a strong evidence base about the components and features of effective wrap-around models. These include:

- **Delivering core health services onsite at the school:** When implemented with a family-centred model and accepted by the community, school-based health services:
 - **Increase access to primary health services.** Students and families were reported to attend the GP or health centre more often when co-located at a school.
 - **Increase health equity**, by increasing the accessibility of health services to students and families who may struggle to find time or transport to off-site health centres / services.
 - **Improve health outcomes** for children and adolescents, through early identification of health challenges (including mental health challenges, eating disorders, and sexual health concerns).
 - **Improve school attendance** by reducing incidences and length of absenteeism due to sickness.
 - **Improve quality of care of service providers** by building stronger relationships, trust and familiarity with students and families through regular and informal interactions (Montgomery et al., 2022; Levinson et al., 2019; Knopf et al., 2016).
- **Offering pathways to wider support networks:** A strength and core feature of wrap-around models is the flexibility of the model to be designed to cater to the needs of the community and families they serve, and for schools to be a connected in with a wide range of broader supports. For families with complex needs, this means:
 - **Being able to access services and supports** will enable families to more easily access a tailored suite of supports that is relevant to their needs.
 - **Having a say in the type and nature of services** and supports that are delivered through a program increases a family's agency and supports their self-determination. Increasing their willingness to seek and utilise the services and supports.
 - **Being responsive to community specific needs** creates a sense that services and supports are for and with the community and families, rather than acting on or to families. Increasing the collective nature of the program, increasing community cohesion, and reducing stigma around accessing the services.
- **Supporting access to informal and formal resources:** The value of explicitly cultivating opportunities for improved informal supports in school-based wrap-around models is that they:
 - **Act as a soft entry point into more formal supports.** Building informal supports at a location where formal services and supports exist as well, enables health and social service professionals to build connections and relationships with families by giving families positive reasons to come and utilise the space (Schurer Coldiron et al., 2017).
 - **Foster a sense of belonging at the school and in the community.** Informal support building activities can connect families and friends to each other, to form bonds, fostering a more connected community as a whole, and one that is more likely to support each other (Campbell et al., 2013).
 - **Organically build relationships** between the school, service delivery staff and community members (Schurer-Coldiron et al., 2017; Walker et al., 2011).
 - **Can increase their quality of care** and increase their individualisation of care to families through connecting with informal supports (Olsen et al., 2021)

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What's required to deliver effective wrap-around service delivery in schools

Research is clear that how wrap-around models are designed and delivered is as important – if not more so – than what services are provided. This chapter covers three particularly important enabling conditions that, when implemented successfully, set up wrap-around models for success:

- Securing buy-in and engagement from community from the outset and in an ongoing way
- Families only telling their story once, and supported to access and receive services in a coordinated, efficient and effective way.
- Warm referral protocols in place across the site.



Our Place Elements



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info@ourplace.org.au
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Our Place sites

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|-----------------|--------------|
| Bridgewood | Morwell |
| Carlton | Northern Bay |
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| Frankston North | Seymour |
| Mooroopna | Westall |