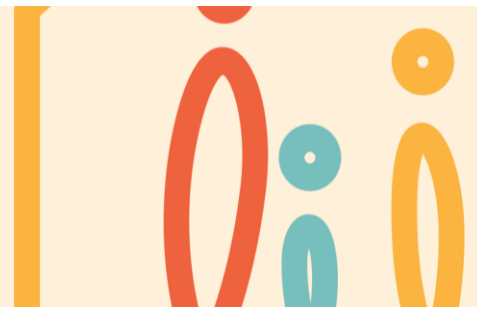




Centre of Research Excellence in
**Childhood Adversity
and Mental Health**



The Centre of Research Excellence in Childhood Adversity and Mental Health is a five-year research program (2019-2023) co-funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and Beyond Blue.

Our vision is to create a sustainable service approach, co-designed with end-users, to improve children's mental health by early detection and response to family adversity.

Why Childhood Adversity and Mental Health?

The prevalence of anxiety disorders and depression in Australian children and youth has not reduced, despite increased use of services and medications for these conditions.

This could be due to inadequate identification and treatment of early risk factors for anxiety disorders and depression. Children who experience challenges or adversities as they grow are 6 to 10 times more likely to develop mental health problems later in life. These adversities or adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) include physical, emotional and sexual abuse or neglect, bullying, parent mental health problems, harsh parenting, parent substance abuse and housing problems. Targeting interventions to reduce these risk factors during the early childhood years could help to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Australian children and the adults they will become.

However, despite substantial evidence demonstrating the benefit of investing in the early years of life, interventions targeting the precursors of mental health disorders - i.e. children's emotional and behavioral problems - do not always reach families most in need. Furthermore, there is a lack of integrated health, education and social services to

support Australian children and families facing adversity.

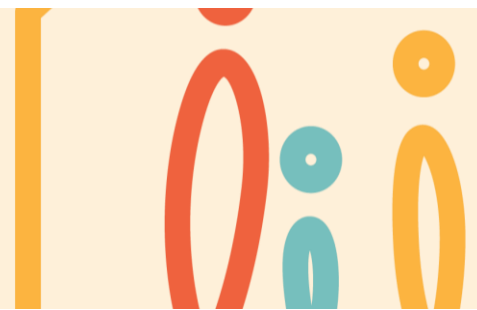
What are we aiming to do?

We aim to tackle this problem by creating a sustainable service approach, co-designed with end-users, to improve children's mental health by early detection and response to family adversity.

To achieve this vision, we will first review the evidence around what interventions are most effective for reducing the negative effects of adversity on children's mental health and wellbeing. Based on this evidence, we also aim to work in partnership with two communities to co-develop and deliver community-based programs that address childhood adversity. This research will be led by a multidisciplinary team of experts in paediatrics, psychology, education, psychiatry and parenting as well as front line service providers and people with lived experience of childhood adversity and mental health problems. The work of the Centre has been organised into the following three themes:

- Theme A: Reviewing the evidence
- Theme B: Co-design and testing service approaches
- Theme C: Policy and implementation.





Theme A - Reviewing the evidence

Led by Professor Tony Jorm of the University of Melbourne, Theme A aims to review the current evidence on strategies to prevent and respond to childhood adversity and associated depression, anxiety disorders and suicidality through a series of systematic literature reviews and meta-analyses. After reviewing the evidence, we will convene a panel of experts, including people with lived experience and experts from education, social and health service sectors, to participate in a Delphi expert consensus study. The Delphi study will enable us to determine what interventions will be the most appropriate for reducing the negative impacts of adversities on children's mental health, in real life settings. We will also include health economic analyses to understand which interventions represent the best value.

Theme B - Co-design and testing service approaches

Led by Professor Harriet Hiscock, Theme B aims to co-develop, with end-users, systems-based approaches that identify and respond to childhood adversity from before birth and into primary school years (0-8 years). The evidence generated from Theme A will inform the design of two intervention service approaches that will be piloted in Wyndham in Victoria and Marrickville in New South Wales. One approach will be tested in community health centres for families of children aged 0-5 years and the second will be tested in primary schools for families of children from 5-8 years. At each site, there will be a range of co-located and integrated health,

education and social services. These services will work in partnership with the community to better identify, engage and support families to lessen the effects of adversity on their children. In doing so, we hope to optimize the mental health of their children.

As we pilot the interventions and systems approaches in our sites, we will evaluate their feasibility, acceptability and how well they work at reducing children's behavioural and emotional problems. We will also measure the impact of these approaches on other outcomes such as parenting, parent mental health, and costs to the healthcare systems and society.

Theme C - Policy and implementation

Led by Professor Sharon Goldfeld, Theme C aims to develop a knowledge translation framework that specifically focuses on taking the learnings from Theme A and purposefully and iteratively considers how they can be translated into practice in the programs of Theme B to promote best uptake. We will also investigate how successful integrated models can be scaled up through government and other funding sources across each Australian jurisdiction.

Timeline

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Theme A	[Active]				
Theme B		[Active]			
Theme C		[Active]			