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New free program to help children recover from trauma

A much-needed free program, Stepping Stones, commenced in Canberra this week for children under 12 year who have experienced trauma.

CatholicCare CEO Anne Kirwan said the developing brain is much more susceptible to the impact of trauma in childhood.

“If untreated, childhood trauma such as a car accident or repeated traumatic incidents such as abuse or witnessing family violence can adversely impact a child’s social and physical health outcomes. Which is why we are proud to have begun to offer the Stepping Stones service providing early intervention to children under 12 at no cost,” said Ms Kirwan, CatholicCare CEO.

“For example, we know that in Australia, 1 in 6 women and 1 in 16 men have experienced emotional, physical or sexual violence from a current or previous partner, and that much of this abuse has been witnessed by children”.

Stepping Stones supports children and their families to recover from the impacts of trauma with a particular focus on the child’s mental health, wellbeing and development.

“We can also help children to develop skills that have not developed properly due to being in a traumatic situation. In addition, families and carers will be supported to understand the impact of trauma on children, assisting them to develop strategies to support the child’s recovery and onward development,” said Ms Kirwan

Capital Health Network (CHN) CEO Megan Cahill said that Stepping Stones uses a multidisciplinary team approach.

“As the ACT’s Primary Health Network, we are proud to fund Stepping Stones as we know it will support children and their families to recover from the impacts of trauma with a particular focus on the child’s mental health, wellbeing and development,” said Ms Cahill, CHN CEO.

Children will receive psychological treatment for the symptoms of trauma which may include nightmares, anxiety, grief and low mood.

“Stepping Stones is essential to ensure children impacted by trauma receive timely and specialist treatment and don’t fall through the gaps,” said Ms Cahill.

Referrals for Stepping Stones can be made by calling 6163 7600 or at www.catholiccare.cg.org.au. Stepping Stones is supported by funding from the ACT PHN through the Australian Government’s PHN Program.