

HealthJusticePartnership

forYouth

Background

The Health Justice Partnership (HJP) comprises Ballarat Community Health (BCH), the Central Highlands Community Legal Centre (CHCLC) and Federation University Australia.

In September 2014, the partnership received funding for two years through the Victorian Legal Service Board Major Grants Program www.lsbv.vic.gov.au

Target group

- To improve legal, health and well-being outcomes for young people aged up to 25 years.
- To build capacity and foster practice change of health and legal professionals at partner agencies about the health and legal issues commonly experienced by young people.
- To increase awareness amongst young people about the legal resources available in the Central Highlands and state-wide.

Why a Health Justice Partnership?

The premise of the HJP is that young people are likely to address their health issues before they identify or address potential legal problems. Unresolved legal problems can have a significant adverse impact on the health and well-being of the young person.

What the research tells us

Typically, young people are not aware of where to access legal assistance. Young people can experience a range of legal problems including civil, criminal and family law.

If these problems are not addressed they may compound and trigger additional and increasingly serious legal issues. Young people in Victoria have a high incidence of multiple legal problems and are more likely to 'handle problems without seeking advice'.

Broader Australian experience

- Legal professionals are only consulted in 16% of all legal issues.
- Typically, people consult with friends, health or welfare professionals.
- Better outcomes are achieved with proper legal advice.
- One in five individuals with legal issues sought help from a doctor prior to contacting lawyer¹

What is the Health Justice Partnership?

This program seeks to identify and address legal, health and wellbeing issues for young people. This will be achieved through the early identification of legal issues using an integrated response with a Youth Lawyer working as a collaborative member of the Youth Services Team based at Ballarat Community Health.

The HJP incorporates three distinct initiatives:

- The HJP will offer legal services to young people at the time when young people attend Ballarat Community Health to seek assistance with their health problems. The lawyer from the Central Highlands Community Legal Centre will be based onsite at Ballarat Community Health, making it easier for

¹Coumarelos, C., Macourt, D., People, J., McDonald, H., Wei, Z., Iriana, R., & Ramsey, S. (2012). *Legal Australia-Wide Survey: Legal Need in Australia (Vol. Volume 7)*. Sydney: Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales.

young people to gain access to legal services. The HJP will also assist staff and other professionals who work directly with young people, to ask a series of key questions (Legal Health Check) to identify at an early stage, if a young person is experiencing legal problems. If the young person is experiencing a legal issue a direct referral can be made to the youth lawyer.

- The HJP brings different professional groups together to facilitate collaboration and enhance the capacity and understanding of the very different ways of working.
- The third component of the HJP is the development of a website which will facilitate access to legal resources for young people and for those who work with them.

The role of the Youth Lawyer

The Youth lawyer will provide a number of different services, including

- Legal Advice
- Casework
- Court representation/advocacy
- Assistance with documentation
- Information/referrals
- Community Legal education
- Liaising with Ballarat Community
- Health and external stakeholders

In which areas will the Youth Lawyer provide assistance?

- Debt
- Interaction with police
- Centrelink (debt, fraud)
- Problems with work or school (eg. sacked, underpaid or bullied)
- Young person is charged with a criminal offence (e.g Assault, breach of an Intervention Order, theft, property damage or graffiti)
- Victim of crime (e.g domestic violence, physical or sexual assault)
- Fines
- Driving related problems (eg. Hoon driving, demerit points, motor vehicle accident or insurance)
- Housing or tenancy issues (e.g bond, eviction, repairs or share housing)

Identifying the legal problem 'Legal Health Check'

Often a young person may not realise they have a legal problem or that their problem can be resolved by speaking to a lawyer. By asking the right questions young people can be assisted in seeking legal advice. A 'Legal Health Check', incorporating questions which reflect the range of legal problems commonly experienced by young people, has been developed for the program. The 'Legal Health Check' can be completed by a young person or used by a referring worker at the time when seeing them about other issues.

A copy of the 'Legal Health Check' is available from the Health Justice Partnership website.

Referrals to the Health Justice Program

Anyone working directly with young people in the Central Highlands can, with the consent of the young person, make a referral to the Health Justice Program.

A consent form is available on the Health Justice Partnership website.

How to make a referral

The best way to make a referral is to complete the online form on the Health Justice Partnership website.

Alternatively:

- Email - calebL@bchc.org.au
- Phone - 0417 310 889

Web site

The Health Justice Partnership website will be a resource for young people and workers alike. The website will be progressively developed across the duration of the program.

For further information on the Health Justice Partnership please visit the website www.cerdi.edu.au/healthjustice or contact

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Who are the partners?

