



## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND YOUTH AFFAIRS  
MICHAEL PETTERSSON MLA (CHAIR), ELIZABETH KICKERT MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), ELIZABETH LEE MLA

### **Inquiry into Youth Mental Health in the ACT ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

Asked by ELIZABETH KICKERT MLA:

In relation to: mental health services involving those in out-of-home care (OOHC)

1. What training do CYPS staff receive regarding the complexity of working with autistic children as opposed to working with neurotypical children?
2. What training do CYPS staff receive regarding working with children who have mental health issues?
3. What assessment is used to determine which children in OOHC require mental health supports?
  - a. Of all children in OOHC, how many have been assessed in this way?
  - b. How many have been found to require mental health supports?
  - c. Ms Grace mentioned that it is a small cohort of young people in OOHC with complex mental health needs. How many are in this cohort?
  - d. How many are currently receiving mental health supports?
4. If a young person in residential care refuses mental health assistance, what happens after that?

MINISTER STEPHEN-SMITH: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:—

Child and Youth Protection Services (CYPS) provide a case management response to children and young people who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing abuse and neglect, and their families. When working with families where a family member experiences mental illness or disability, CYPS engages with experts to provide the necessary advice and direction within care team meetings.

1. CYPS does not deliver training specifically on the complexity of working with children on the Autism Spectrum. CYPS has practice guidance to support staff who work with children, young people and families with a disability, including working with children on the Autism Spectrum. This practice guidance strongly focuses on young people with a disability in Youth Justice. CYPS is developing a practice guide on working with families where a member has a disability. Once launched, this practice guide will be supported by training to staff.
2. CYPS, and in particular staff at Melaleuca Place, receive training with regard to trauma and its impact on a child's social, emotional and cognitive development which can include adverse mental health experiences. CYPS staff refer to and engage with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Head Space or other mental health services if mental health concerns are

identified for a child or young person. Staff consult with experts to develop appropriate case plans to respond to mental health needs.

3. The ACT's five-year strategy, *A Step up for Our Kids* is creating a therapeutic, trauma-informed care system which responds more effectively to the needs of children and young people in care. Therapeutic assessments are developed for every child and young person in care.
  - a. As at 28 May 2020, approximately 790 therapeutic assessments have been completed for children and young people in care.
  - b. Early support is crucial for children and young people in care and the completion of a therapeutic assessment is a priority. For children and young people who are identified early, emotional wellbeing can be boosted by supporting the caregiver with trauma-informed care strategies. Adolescents are usually identified as requiring further assessment by a qualified mental health provider.
  - c. To provide the specific response to this question would take significant time as it would require the review of the individual clinical records of all children in out of home care. In this instance, I do not believe that it would be appropriate to divert resources from other priority activities for the purposes of answering the Member's question.
  - d. Refer to c above.
4. If there are concerns about a young person's mental state, ACT Together continues to discuss with the young person about the importance of accessing the support available to them. It is not uncommon for young people to be ambivalent about accessing mental health support. As such, mental health providers are still engaged in care team meetings to ensure there is mental health advice to inform responses of staff to young people. If there are serious concerns about mental health deterioration, the young person could be transported to hospital for urgent psychiatric assessment and/or treatment under the *Mental Health Act 2015*.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs

Signature:



Date: 29/6/20

By the Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA