



ACT Government

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Taking the Territory forward

MEDIA RELEASE

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\$2.1 MILLION FOR IMPROVED SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The ACT Government will invest \$2.1 million to establish a new service to support vulnerable children in their first years of life and their families.

Minister for Health Katy Gallagher said the first two years of life were often crucial for the future health and well being of children.

“Unfortunately this is also the age when a child is most vulnerable to and most at risk of abuse or neglect,” she said.

“This year’s Budget invests \$2.1 million over four years to identify at risk children and families as early as possible, to assess their needs, and ensure that they receive the support they need.

“The initiative will improve health and development outcomes for children in the target group and build the long-term capacity of ACT Health programs to identify and address the needs of at risk children and families.

“It will also work to provide training and other support to build the parenting skills of the parents.”

Ms Gallagher said when a parent or parents of children were affected by serious mental illness or drug and alcohol problems, their capacity to provide the care and support that their children need can be reduced.

“This initiative will establish a comprehensive service that will provide clients of Mental Health ACT, and people receiving drug and alcohol services, with intensive support and case management during their pregnancy and up until their youngest child is 2 years old,” she said.

“This service will be responsible for improving the safety, health and wellbeing of these at-risk children and families.”

This initiative links closely with the outcomes of the 2006 Murray-Mackie study, which highlighted the complexities of working with vulnerable parents who are caring for children.

“Part of the reason for commissioning the Murray-Mackie study was to better understand the nature of the contact between the various government agencies, the young children and their parents. This initiative will ensure that we are continuing to improve on services for these children and families.

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Ms Gallagher said the service would be co-ordinated with other services within ACT Health and other government agencies, general practices, pharmacies and with non-Government community services, to ensure that the needs of the child and family were addressed in an integrated way.