



Kids Health Matters Transcript **Episode 5: CAMHS Crisis Connect part 2**

The Child and Adolescent Health Services respects and acknowledges the Whadjuk People as the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and of Elders past and present.

Hi and welcome to Kids Health Matters - a podcast where we meet experts from the Child and Adolescent Health Service, which includes Perth Children's Hospital.

Each episode will dive into a range of topics and issues affecting kids' health and wellbeing and provide you with information on how you can best support them through their journey of childhood and adolescence.

Host Danielle Shuey (DS)

Hello, this is Kids Health Matters. I'm Dani Shuey and this is part two of our chat with Veronica Plej from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

We have been talking about a really difficult subject in this two-part episode about mental health and when there's a crisis for your child or young person living in your home or someone you may know.

In the first part we talked about why you would come to the service and in this episode we want to talk about the service itself, what it does and how it can help.

So Veronica, welcome back and nurse Daniel Engelbrecht, welcome back to you again, too.

Let's get straight into it. What is CAMHS Crisis Connect and how does it help?

Guest Veronica Plej (VP)

Hi Dani, we're a group of very experienced mental health professionals. We've got psychiatrists and allied health professionals on our team; we've got lots of clinical nurse specialists, clinical nurses, registered nurses, and great admin staff and we're all there to support young people and their families in the community who are struggling with their mental health.

DS

You have a crisis line with CAMHS and we've mentioned this many times, CAMHS stands for the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, that's got a 1-800 number. So what happens if you pick up and call?

VP

Firstly, we'd get some of the demographic information out of the way; like the young person's name and details just to see if there's any information on the system so we don't have to ask some



questions again. This can be relieving for frequent users of the service because they don't have to repeat the young person's history.

Then we would try and work out what's going on for the young person by listening carefully first, and then providing advice and perhaps a signpost to services. We'll also be able to give advice on whether a presentation to the emergency department is required or not.

Co-host Danielle Engelbrecht (DE)

So Veronica, does this mean that CAMHS Crisis Connect is an alternative to presenting to ED?

VP

Yes, that's right. We provide mental health assessments for children presenting to the Perth Children's Hospital Emergency Department as well as other Perth metropolitan EDs as needed, providing specialists mental health assessments and support. When people ring the number they can often save themselves a trip into an emergency department with really long wait times and often stressful environments. So we're very happy to advise whether a presentation is required or not.

DS

It's important to note here that this service is available in the Perth metropolitan area and also statewide via WA Country Health.

VP

Yes, and WA Country Health have their own number.

DS

Does CAMHS offer follow ups?

VP

Yes. Over the past few years we've had feedback from our consumers, identifying gaps and follow ups for the young people. A high demand on community mental health services also indicated long wait times unfortunately. Bearing this in mind, the CAMHS Crisis Connect Intervention Program was developed and that was to bridge the gap in between the wait times.

DS

What is the Intervention Program Veronica?



VP

It's a two week follow up programme providing solution-focused mental health support and treatment for young people and their families, supporting and engaging families and young people together with schools, teachers and private clinicians to provide an overall holistic mental health care for families.

DE

Veronica, is there an age limit in terms of who can access the CAMHS Crisis Connect?

VP

Young people up to the age of 18 and their families can call the crisis line for mental health support and advice.

DS

If we talking about parents or carers calling the number because they have concerns for their young person, what can they expect from that interaction with one of the mental health specialists?

VP

We will determine what's required; it can be advice or information or the assessment could actually be face-to-face within the emergency department or via telehealth, as well as at other hospitals' emergency departments in the community, in the young person's home, depending on what would be best for the patient, which is what we always keep in mind. Staff will provide a comprehensive mental health assessment and determine what next steps are needed. We'll assess the child and make recommendations for what's required next.

DE

And Veronica if you are experiencing an immediate crisis with your child or you know someone who is experiencing that, what is the best way you can support them in that moment?



VP

We recommend they call CAMHS Crisis Connect on the 1800 number and ask for advice. We encourage the family to call directly as well to discuss the situation and stay with your child and remain supportive and as calm as possible.

DS

So what happens next? We've reached out to contact CAMHS, we've spoken with someone, what is the progression that happens to help?

VP

So Dani it really depends on the nature of the issue.

Depending on what the child and family needs there are several options we can recommend. One would be community-based mental health services, including Headspace, private clinicians including private psychologists or counsellors.

We've also got several community CAMHS clinics, so we could refer to a community CAMHS Crisis Connect intervention clinic which is what we mentioned previously; the two week intervention clinic; a school psychologist, a school chaplain or private clinicians.

And finally, if required, a ward 5A admission.

DS

What's Ward 5A?

VP

Ward 5A is the inpatient mental health unit here at Perth Children's Hospital.

DS

Is there anything that Crisis Connect can't offer?

VP

We can't provide medication advice over the phone for the safety of the child and we would suggest that families contact the prescribing doctor or go to their GP. We can help in finding details out if required.

DE

If the recommendation by CAMHS Crisis Connect is to go to ED with your child, what happens?



VP

If you're worried about your child, and you've been advised to present to ED for urgent care, you can visit ED with your child. The ED staff are amazing and very friendly and they always offer support as needed.

DS

Veronica, you've been working in this area for many years and I'm sure you've got many stories. Is there any story in particular that stands out for you that might encourage people to call?

VP

Oh, there's so many Dani, but a typical one that I remember, and we've probably had quite a few that are similar, is we received a call from a father who was really worried about his daughter, who was showing signs of depression, of a low mood, she was withdrawing from friends and family, wasn't willing to attend school anymore.

He called the 1 800 number and spoke at length with one of the clinicians and we were able to call and speak with the young person separately and offer a gentle, calm and open approach, asking her what was going on, and what her worries were. That took a little bit of time, because building a rapport is important, talking to a stranger at the other end of a phone may not be the easiest thing to do.

So just helping them unpack what was going on for them was good. It took some time but we were able to build rapport and found out she was being bullied at school and felt really rejected by her friends, so to avoid these issues she was staying home a lot and didn't feel that she could open up to anyone about that.

But with the young person's consent we discussed this with her dad and he was able to communicate this with the school. They looked into the situation and a safety plan was able to be implemented.

DS

That's incredible, isn't it. That's real evidence of how you've worked hard on getting a child's trust, getting them to open up and you figured out the issue. That's sometimes something parents or carers just cannot do.

VP

That's right; we take our time and really want to be there for the young person. I think young people and people in general, but especially young people, can pretty much determine if you're being genuine or not, and that's what our clinicians are, very genuine on the phone.



DE

Veronica, are there any other resources that you can recommend that might help in these situations?

VP

Yes there's several; some of my favourites would be the Brave online program. It's a really helpful tool for young people with anxiety and there's a Brave program for parents as well.

There's a lot of apps. We know how much young people like to be on their devices, so the Calm app has got lots of mindfulness and grounding activities to help de-stress young people and there's also Mindshift, that's another app targeted specifically towards young people and teenagers.

DS

Of course we will have the link to all of those apps in our show notes.

So let's talk about your crisis-related roles. There's obviously going to be stress for the nurses dealing with these situations when we're talking about mental health so it's important that you, as workers, take care of your mental health too.

What do you enjoy about your work and why is it so rewarding to you?

VP

Well, working closely with patients and families in times of crisis is such a privilege. They're letting you into their world and seeing them come through the other end feeling better is really rewarding.

I work with an excellent team of colleagues which helps keeps our spirits up. I've also learned to prioritise self-care which is important for anyone working or caring with someone who's been impacted by poor mental health.

I make sure to enjoy things, making time for things I love, like exercise, taking time with my dog, my kids, my partner. I also make sure that I engage in clinical supervision with my colleagues, making sure we check in on each other, seeing how we can best support each other. We will discuss stories together and see how could we have done things differently and we're constantly looking at how we can improve.

Families need to do the same really, check in with your tribe, make time for yourself and ensure your cup's full before giving out to others.

DS

A little birdie told us your daughter is headed down the same path as her mum in this area.



VP

Very true, she's just commenced her graduate program at PCH and she's got her first six-month rotation on this ward, and then she's going on to our next ward in March and she's loving it.

DS

The work you do is incredible and it's so important to so many people.

Have you got any key messages or any words that you'd like to end on here to sum up the advice that you've given us today about the work of CAMHS?

VP

Remember that CAMHS is a 24-hour service. Families don't have to be in crisis; they can just call for a chat. They can call for information and the same for young people, and I think the sooner we get young people calling, the more empowered they can feel to be part to take ownership of their own mental health, realising that we're not scary, we're there to help and we're non-judgmental.

As I said, you don't have to be in crisis to call the service. If you're concerned regarding your child's mental health call us for advice, the team's only too happy to help.

DS

That's awesome and I just need to say there is absolutely no shame in asking for help and seeking help is there?

VP

Absolutely not. We do it amongst ourselves even as a team and we encourage others to do the same.

DS

And if your child needs help, there's no shame in that either. You haven't failed as a parent. It's super common and I think it's actually really brave to take those first steps to seek help and to better equip ourselves with how to handle these situations.

Veronica Plej, clinical nurse specialist for CAMHS Crisis Connect thank you for being in studio today, and nurse Danielle Engelbrecht, thank you as always.

CAMHS Crisis Connect is a free service available by calling [1800 048 636](tel:1800048636), 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Remember, we've only touched on one of CAMHS services through these episodes, but there are a number of our other community-based services that you can also access and for more information please check out our show notes.



We also have a number of episodes and one in particular on depression should you wish to learn more in this series of Kids Health Matters, so please check that out.

Thanks for listening to Kids Health Matters, a podcast produced by the Child and Adolescent Health Service. You can find more information and links to useful resources in the show notes for each episode. You can also email us with any feedback at kidshealthmatters@health.wa.gov.au.

