Out-of-Home Care Health Pathway Program

May 2025

Rose Kassolis

Program Officer, interagency team,
Child and Family, DCJ

Communities and Justice

NSW GOVERNMENT

Health needs of children in Out-Of-Home Care (OOHC)

Children in OOHC are likely to have unmet, undiagnosed and complex health needs

The Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS) shows, children in OOHC are more likely than their peers to present with a cognitive delay or a mental health concern

Children in OOHC continue to face barriers when accessing health services and achieving continuity of care

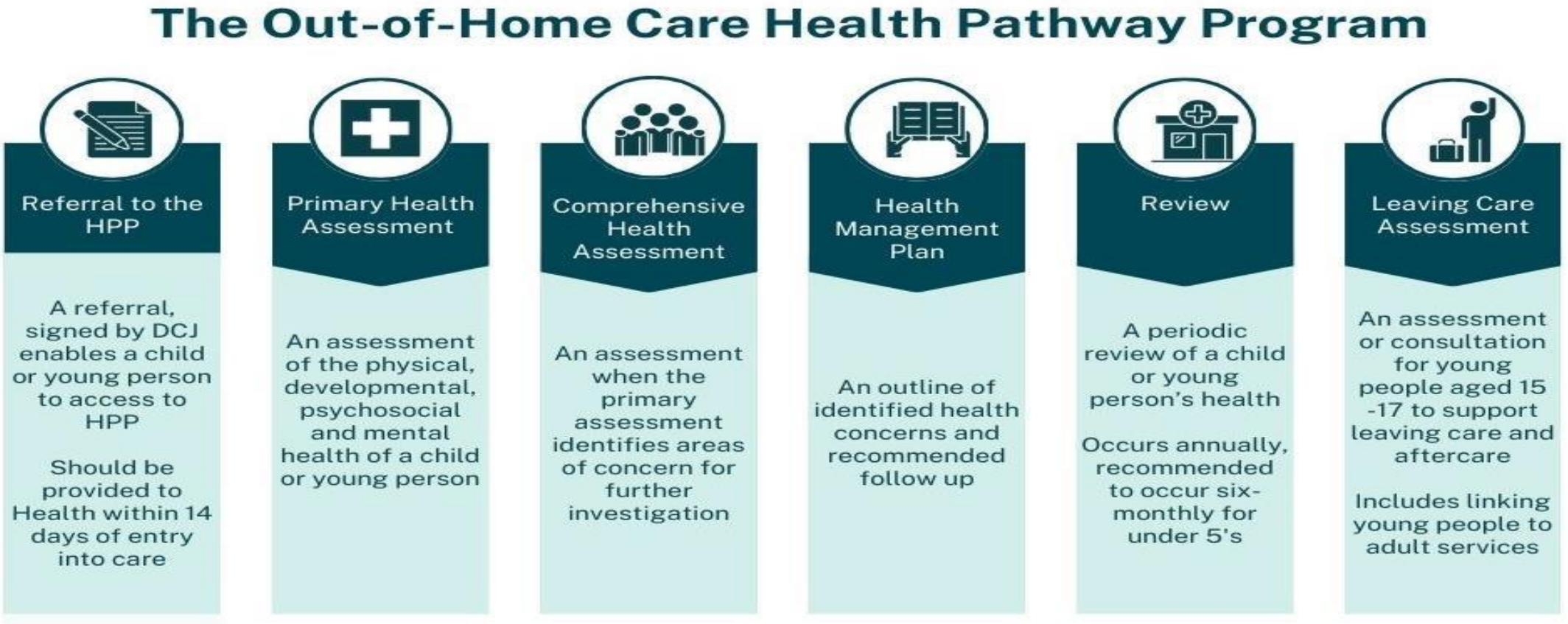
Creation of the Out-of-Home Care Health Pathway Program

Established in 2010, the Out-of-Home Care Health Pathway Program is a joint initiative between DCJ and NSW Health to deliver timely health assessment, planning and health service navigation and intervention to children where Parental Responsibility is assigned to the Minister.

The program is delivered as a partnership model and relies on engagement between the health teams, caseworkers, carer and parents/extended family.

The Coordinator is the central contact point in each Local Health District, the Coordinator or their staff will liaise with caseworkers or carers directly. They have the knowledge of the services within their district and can support with service navigation.

The OOHC Health Pathway program process



How does this relate to FASD?

Everyone has a pivotal role in meeting the child's health needs

The OOHC Health Pathway Program is not an exclusive diagnostic service, they are a key partner in helping you navigate the child's health needs and the health system.

Better engagement with the OOHC Health Pathway Program and collaboration with key stakeholders can support the child to access planned, trauma informed and coordinated health assessment and intervention.

What does this mean in practice?

INFORMATION GATHERING

PLANNING

COLLABORATION

Information gathering

What information do I need, where do I get that information and who can support me to get that information

Respectful conversation with the child's family about their own health history and how that may relate to the child's current health

Information about the child from the parents, when did the child meet their developmental milestones? Any worries? Past interventions?

Respectful conversation with child's mother about their pregnancy journey, being mindful of the shame, guilt or worry that a disclosure may carry for them

Information gathering from past and/or private providers, remembering their records are not linked with public health records

Information from the carer and the preschool/school, including information on their abilities and difficulties, past and current learning, and social skills

Planning

Work with the OOHC Health Pathway Program team to support you navigate the health system

Consult with your clinical specialist i.e. DCJ, Psychological and Specialist services, for NGO your internal clinical teams

Explore assessments or other supports - what supports can be in place prior to the diagnostic assessment

Explore ways to engage the parent, can they provide additional information? Can they attend the appointment?

Engage carer supports to assist carers to provide a reparative home environment

Attend the appointment prepared, have the information available to support the assessment

Collaboration

Collaboration brings all the key stakeholders together to allow for joint planning and service delivery, pre and post assessment

Collaboration should aim to provide wrap around support for the child and their carer/parent

Collaboration supports targeted service intervention, aims to reduce duplication assessments

Collaboration promotes accountability and role clarification

Collaborate with key stakeholders to deliver post assessment intervention, reinforces the concept of team around the child

Collaborate with specialist services to help you navigate broader systems like the NDIS

For more information

DCJ webpage:

https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/service-providers/oohc-and-permanency-support-services/oohc-health-pathway.html

NSW Health webpage:
https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/MCFhealth/programs/Pages/out-of-home-care.aspx

PSP learning hub E learning module:

https://psplearninghub.com.au/document/oohc-health-pathway-e-learning-course/