

# Supporting change through conversations: PERCS Conversation Guide

Forum #3

30 May, 2024

Emerging  
Minds.

National  
Workforce  
Centre for Child  
Mental Health





## **Acknowledgement of Country**

We recognise the land on which we meet today and pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Peoples, their ancestors, the elders past, present and future from the different First Nations across this Country.

We acknowledge the importance of connection to land, culture, spirituality, ancestry, family and community for the wellbeing of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.



## Introductions

**Julie Ngwabi**

Senior Child Mental Health Advisor - Health

**Travis Gibson**

Engagement Officer - Health

## Lived experience recognition

We invite one another to recognise the children, young people and adults within families and communities with many and varied lived experiences who have come before us. We appreciate the experiences of people whose pain, trauma and heartache, including harmful systemic practices, require recognition and compassion. At Emerging Minds, we are committed to valuing the voice and expertise of lived experience.



# Outline

- The ecology of the ‘whole child’.
- Impact of parental and family adversities on the child.
- The ‘PERCS’ domains that influence parenting and child mental health and wellbeing.
- PERCS Conversation Guide: supporting collaborative conversations with parents on their parenting and children.



# The whole child's ecology and mental health

# Being child-aware and parent-sensitive



- Many people accessing services are parents
- Recognising parenting role as inseparable to parent's identity and recovery.
- Mental illness and other adversities may disrupt parent-child relationship impacting children's mental health.
- Engaging parents to support regardless of adult-focused or child-focused setting.
- Supporting parenting → supporting children's mental health outcomes.
- Early intervention.

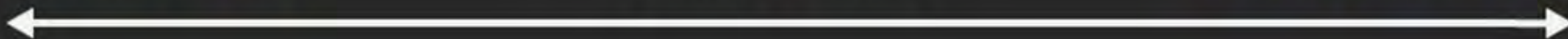
# The mental health continuum



**Positive  
mental health**

**Mental health  
vulnerabilities**

**Diagnosed mental  
health conditions**



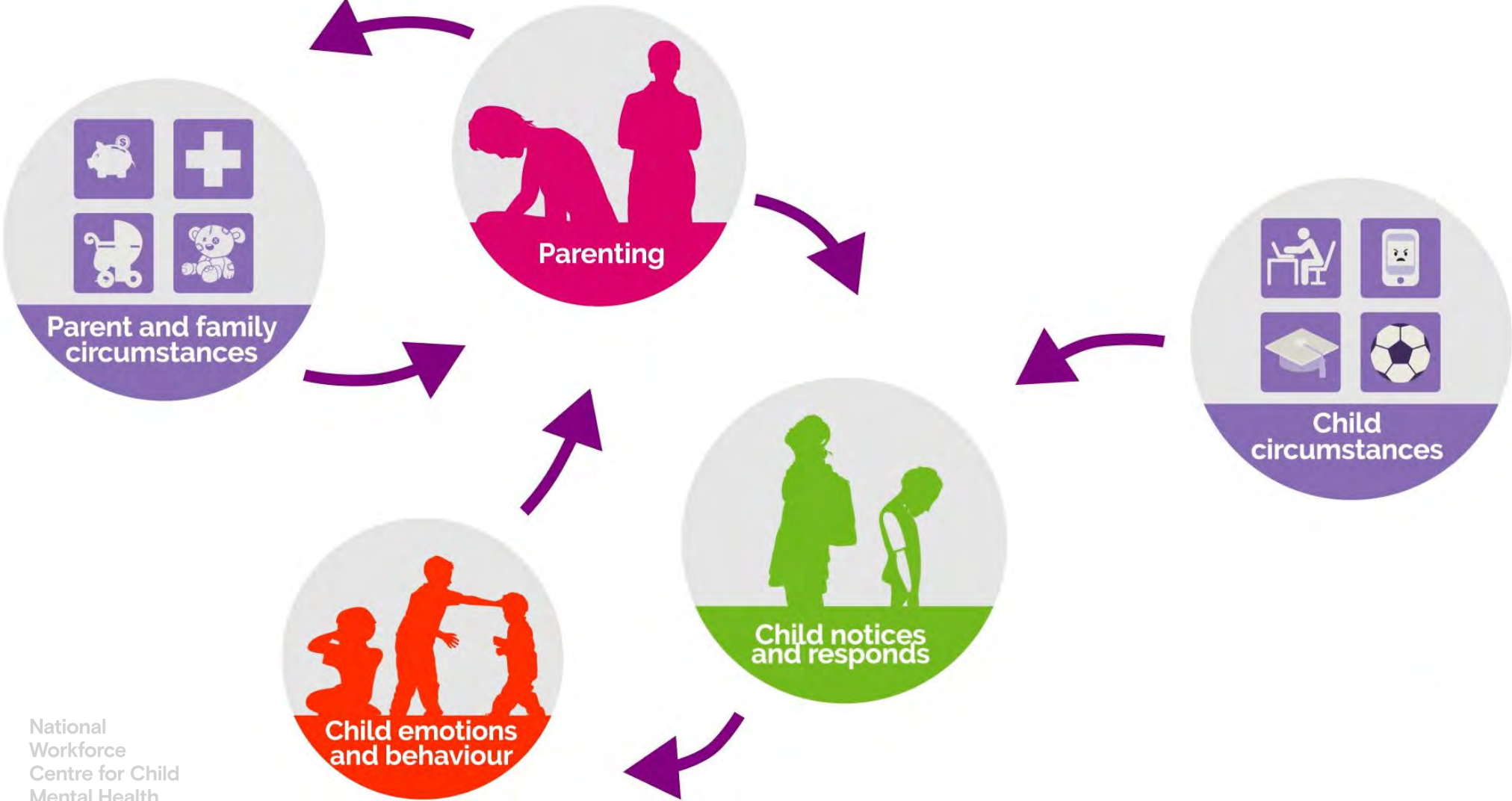




## The whole child

- How children experience the world around them.
- Shaped and influenced by a range of social and environmental factors → the 'whole child'.
- One area of a child's life can affect others.
- Children should be viewed in the context of their relationships/environments.

# The parent-child loop



## **Adversities**

**Mental illness**

**Substance use**

**Abuse and neglect**

**Family violence**

**Parental separation or divorce**

**Incarceration**

**Physical illness**

**Disability**

## **Social determinants of health**

**Socioeconomic status**

**Education**

**Employment opportunities**

**Housing, food and income security**

**Social support and inclusion**

**Neighbourhood environment**

**Access to health care**

**Transportation**

# What are 'complex' presentations?

- Complex needs: Numerous, chronic or interrelated challenges.
- Breadth of need: multiple interconnected needs.
- Depth of need: level of support required.
- There may be several coexisting adversities and social disadvantages, **regardless of entry point.**
- For more information see: [Supporting staff to work with children and families with complex needs: A checklist for organisations](#)



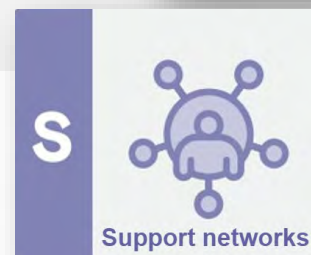
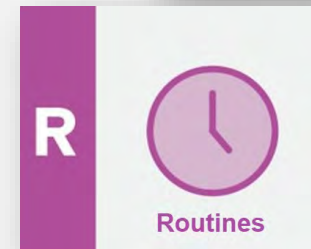


**How can we make a  
difference?**

**Supporting parenting and  
children's mental health**

# The PERCS framework

- A set of domains to support parenting and children's mental health
- Safe and nurturing **P**arent-child relationships
- Ability to regulate and express **E**motions
- Predictable and consistent **R**outines
- Ability to **C**ommunicate and make sense of their world
- Wrap-around **S**upport networks





## **Group discussion**

- 1. What gets in the way of talking to parents about their parenting, and about their children?**
- 2. What strategies has your organisation/service used to support these conversations as part of routine practice?**

# PERCS Conversation Guides



Parent-child  
relationship



Emotions and  
behaviours



Routines



Communication and  
meaning-making



Support  
networks



# PERCS Conversation Guide

- Psychosocial conversation guide.
- Support conversations about the impact of adversity on parenting and children’s mental health.
- Flexible to work context and family circumstances.
- Versions:
  - General.
  - Substance affected parents.
  - Domestic violence and children.

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**PERCS Domains**

This guide provides a pathway and example questions for exploring the five domains of a child's life.

Domain	Description	Professional's role
<b>P</b> Parent-child relationship	A safe, secure, responsive and nurturing relationship between a child and their parent/caregiver is key to building resilience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify if/how parents feel, stay connected to their child in the face of challenges.</li> <li>Promote parents' confidence and a positive parent-child relationship (warmth, acceptance, stability).</li> </ul>
<b>E</b> Emotions and behaviours	Children need to feel loved, safe and confident that their emotions will be listened to and responded to in a nurturing way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help parents to understand and be responsive to their child's emotions and behaviours.</li> <li>Help to develop a shared language around emotions.</li> </ul>
<b>R</b> Routines	Routines and rituals provide children with a stable base, especially in times of stress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage parents to create routines and predictability in their children's lives.</li> </ul>
<b>C</b> Communication and meaning-making	Through respectful and effective communication, children can express emotions, make meaning from experiences of adversity, and develop their resilience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support parents in understanding the impact of adult issues on their child.</li> <li>Guide parents in helping their children make sense of life events through questions and conversation.</li> </ul>
<b>S</b> Support networks	Safe and supportive networks outside the family can be key to a child's social and emotional wellbeing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help parents to identify and develop a consistent, positive support network for their child outside of their immediate family.</li> </ul>

**Example question**  
 Who do you think would notice if [child's name] was struggling?

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**PERCS Conversation Guide summary**

The PERCS Conversation Guide is a psychosocial discussion tool for professionals working with parents. It supports collaborative, respectful conversations around the impact of parental and family adversities, such as mental and physical health issues, substance use issues, and family and domestic violence on children's daily lives.

The guide provides example questions to help you explore five important domains in a child's life. It is designed to help you to recognise parents' strengths and hopes for their family, and opportunities to support and improve children's mental and physical health, resilience and wellbeing.

There are four broad stages to the guide:

- 1 What is the entry point?**

Look for opportunities, or 'entry points' to engage the parent in conversations about their child. Potential entry points include:

  - The parent presents with an issue or circumstances that might impact on the child.
  - The parent expresses concerns about the child's behaviour or circumstances.
  - The professional explores the child's mental health and wellbeing through:
    - open enquiry
    - concerns around parental, family, or social adversity.
- 2 What are you curious about?**

Consider the five PERCS domains:

  - P** Parent-child relationships
  - E** Emotions and behaviours
  - R** Routines
  - C** Communication and meaning-making
  - S** Support networks

This guide contains example questions to assist professionals in their conversations with parents.
- 3 Conversation with the parent**

Conduct a collaborative and respectful conversation with the parent to arrive at shared understandings and decisions, using the six principles of parent engagement:

  - Child-aware and parent-sensitive
  - Curiosity
  - Collaboration
  - Strengths and hopes
  - Context
  - Respect

These principles will support the development of the trusting therapeutic relationship.
- 4 Provide support**

Provide support to parents to lessen the impacts of adversity on their children:

  - Use a strengths-based approach to support a positive parent-child relationship and improved social and emotional wellbeing for children.
  - Provide resources to parents regarding child development and parenting practices.
  - Practice integrated care and make warm referrals to other community supports or specialist services.
  - Continue to work with the parent around their initial presenting issue.

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# Four stages of the guide

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The parent-child relationship may be disrupted by adversity.

## Practitioner's role

**Identify what parents want** for their relationship with their children.

Promote **parent's confidence** and a **positive parent-child relationship**.

## Example questions

How would you describe your relationship with (child's name)?

What is important in your relationship with (child's name)?

What kind of relationship do you hope for with your children?

**E**



## Emotions and behaviours

Strong worries or emotions about adversity will often present as behaviours.

### Practitioner's role

**Explore what they've noticed** about how their children's emotions and behaviours have been affected by adversity, and how they've responded.

### Example questions

"How do you think (child's name) feels about what's been happening?"

"What is having the biggest impact on (child's name)?"



Children's routines may be disrupted by adversity.

## Practitioner's role

**Identify the routines that are important to them and their children,** and how these have been affected by adversity.

## Example questions

"What activities do you and (child's name) enjoy doing together?"

"How might some of these routines been affected?"



Children make meaning out of their experiences and may blame themselves for what is happening.

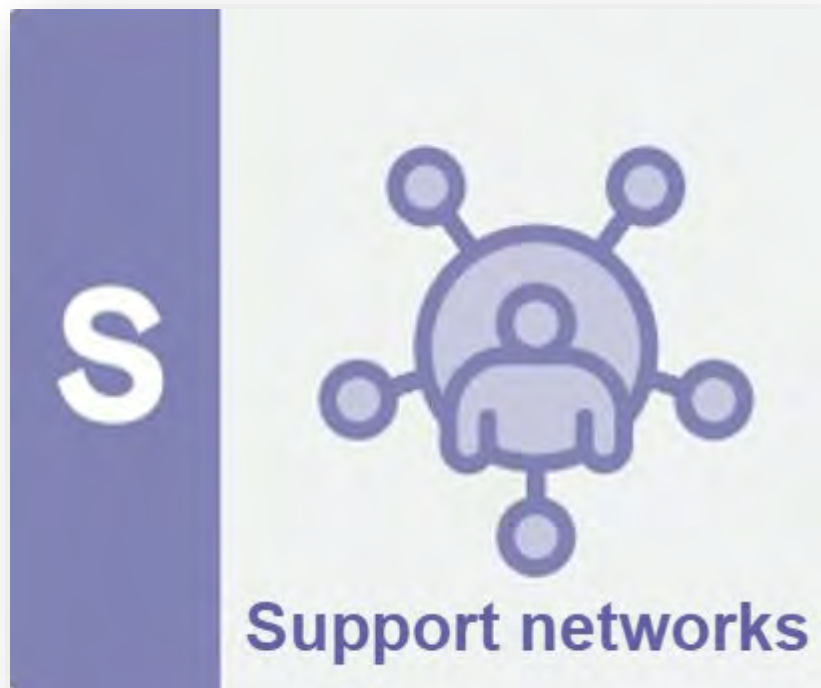
## Practitioner's role

Explore how their children **have made sense of the adversity**, and how they might have supported the children **not to blame themselves**.

## Example questions

“What opportunities do you get, even small ones, to spend time talking with (child’s name)?”

“How do you think (child’s name) may be making sense of what is happening?”



Adversity can disrupt a child's support networks.

## Practitioner's role

**Explore what support networks exist for their children**, and how these networks might support the children's mental health and wellbeing.

## Example questions

“Who does (child's name) enjoy spending time with, outside of immediate family? Who are their close friends?”

“Has (child's name)'s relationships and friendships been impacted in any way?”

# How can you use the guide in your organisation/practice to support conversations with parents about their parenting and child's mental health?

Using it in supervision with clinicians working with families

circulate it to all clinicians and support them with resources for children and parents

Education sessions to inpatient staff  
Education with Case Managers  
Print outs on staff table  
Supervision

Share with staff through an in-service session

I'd love a laminated print out of the PERCS guide to give to practitioners to keep and use in sessions

Talk to my clients about their children

Promote the guide in the service to clinicians

Distribute to Teams within the LHD



# How can you use the guide in your organisation/practice to support conversations with parents about their parenting and child's mental health?

Supervision with clinicians working with families

By sharing this resource with my managers to promote and seek education

Bringing the guides to the adult mental health teams

Could provide to case managers as a tool could use as alternative to LetsTalk as it is shorter

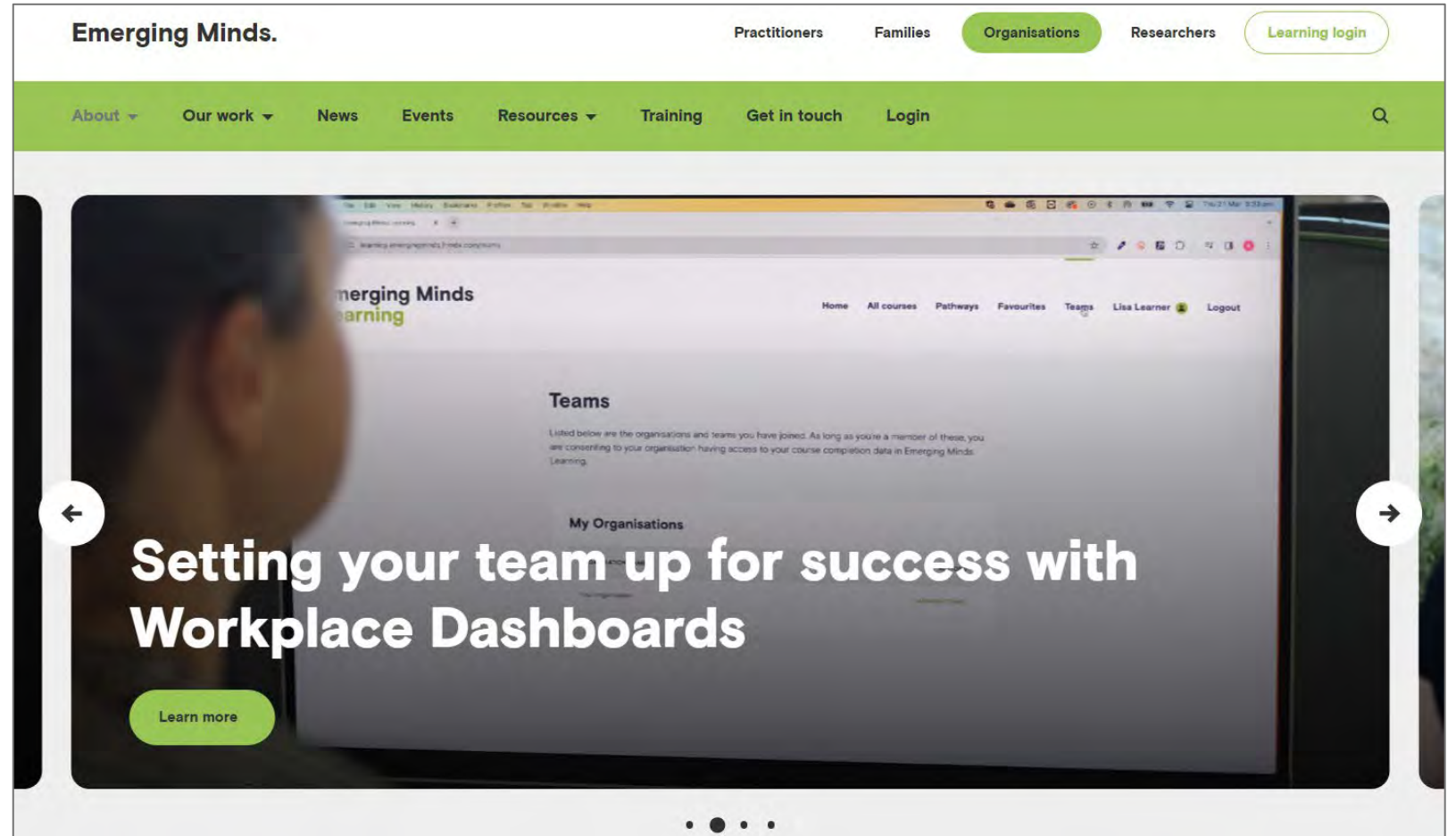
using it in supervision session;  
discussing with colleagues;  
discussed in group meeting;  
printing out and has it displayed in the office

training days for staff to teach them how to effectively apply PERCS

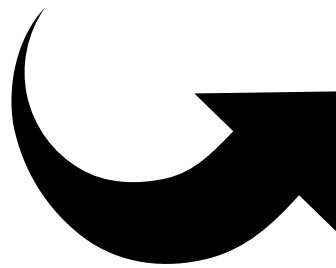
Make it an In-Service discussion with the team

This will be a good companion to the family Focus Recovery Framework

# Introducing – Emerging Minds Learning Workplace Dashboards



**Sign up for  
the Workplace  
Dashboard  
here!**



# Thank you.

Please let us know if you have any questions or comments on the presentation.

We appreciate your feedback.

*The National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health under the National Support for Child and Youth Mental Health Program.*

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