



Allied Health Program

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Allied Health refers to a range of complementary disciplines. Some examples are social work, occupational therapy, podiatry, speech pathology, dietetics and physiotherapy.

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The Allied Health in Children's Centres program primarily provides speech pathology and occupational therapy (OT). These two disciplines have been identified as having key roles in providing early intervention services to promote optimal child development outcomes. These roles complement other staff employed in Children's Centres, including Community Development Coordinators and Family Services Coordinators.

The Allied Health staff share specialised knowledge that supports Children's Centre staff in identifying children at risk of developmental delay and support staff and parents in promoting children's optimal development. Speech pathologists assist with all aspects of communication including speech, language, literacy, signs, symbols and gestures and can also assist with issues around eating and drinking. Occupational therapists support children's optimal participation in and performance of daily activities. This may involve strengthening of play skills, fine and gross motor skills, concentration and self-regulation skills. This is achieved by providing adaptations to the environment, modification of tasks, opportunities to practice skills, educating and supporting significant others to support children in these tasks.

The Allied Health program augments the universal early childhood and child and family health services provided across the State. The

Lead Program Officer Early Childhood and Children's Centres, SA Health, provides statewide program leadership and coordination of evaluation and a professional development program for the Allied Health staff.

Approximately 20 Allied Health staff members are involved in the delivery of the program, funded by the Department for Education and Child Development and employed by SA Health, where they receive professional support and discipline specific supervision. The Allied Health practitioners are part of the local Children's Centre Leadership Team, contributing to centre-wide activities and planning. They aim to build the capacity of staff, parents/carers and the community of the centre by providing prevention and early intervention services such as:

- *centre staff support*: one-to-one consultation and professional development sessions on topics such as sensory processing and strategies for assisting children with behavioural, emotional and sensory regulation, resource development, screening, assessments and programming assistance
- *parenting programs and support* including, parenting groups, one-to-one consultation, strategies for assisting children with toileting, feeding, play, speech and language skills and provision of written information/brochures and assistance with referral pathways
- *children's group programs*: eg, Walk and Talk, Jump and Jive, speech and OT (SPOT) therapy and phonological awareness groups and Cool Friends social skills groups
- *centre events and support of community development programs* such as, supported playgroups and involvement in the family contact program.