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| Good Practice Bulletin |
| Spotlight on health  Office of Professional Practice, Issue 23, July 2019 |

# Chief Practitioner’s welcome

# Woman with short blonde hair, smiling at camera. Woman is Tracy Beaton, Chief Practitioner of Office of Professional Practice

**Tracy Beaton**

When families function well and parents are alert to their children’s health needs, minor health conditions can be effectively treated and resolved, and more complex health needs are given due attention.

As a child protection practitioner, you are likely to work with families who may not see, or be able to respond to their child’s health needs. Neglect or minimising a child’s health needs may mean that something as treatable as an ear infection leads to a chronic ear condition, impacting on the child’s learning, ability to communicate with friends and family, and potentially results in permanent hearing loss. Unattended viral infections may become bacterial and without medical intervention may develop into life-threatening conditions. Unvaccinated children are at risk of contracting a range of potentially fatal, yet easily preventable, diseases. In child protection we also see children with complex medical needs that require management and treatment by a competent caregiver.

When working with children, developing an understanding of their health status is a critical part of a risk and needs assessment. Check to see whether caregivers are alert to, and able to undertake the tasks required to keep the child healthy. What might be getting in the way of a parent caring for their child’s health needs? Consider factors that may interfere in that care such as mental health, drug and alcohol, lack of awareness or managing other more overwhelming issues such as living in a violent relationship.

The [Better Health Channel](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/) < https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/> is an excellent Victorian online resource. If you are working with a family where a child has been diagnosed with measles for example, to refresh your knowledge check-out the [measles](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/searchresults?q=measles) <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/searchresults?q=measles> information on the Better Health Channel website.

The case study this month considers the acute presentation of a young person with [diabetes](file:///C:\Users\slus1011\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\L3C7X2X9\%3chttps:\www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au\conditionsandtreatments\diabetes%3e) <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/conditionsandtreatments/diabetes>. Diabetes is an example of a health condition, that when well managed by competent adults, children will have few complications. Poorly managed diabetes may be fatal.

**Case study**

Sixteen-year-old Ramona has type 1 diabetes. She lives with her foster carer Beverley. Recently, Ramona has been returning home much later than agreed and she has not been taking her diabetes kit with her when visiting friends. Beverley has been concerned that Ramona has appeared drug affected on recent occasions where she has returned home late. With the support of Beverley and a diabetes educator, Ramona usually manages her diabetes well. However, recently she does not seem to be taking as much care and sometimes misses her regular insulin injections and is not eating a regular diet.

You are a practitioner at the After-Hours Child Protection Emergency Service. Beverley calls you at 12.30am on Friday night advising that Ramona has not returned home. You check the after-hours possible contact case note for guidance. While you can see from the notes that Ramona is diabetic, there is limited information about what practical steps are required to meet her health needs and you are not sure of the health implications of poorly managed diabetes. Beverley is particularly concerned, as when Ramona tested her levels before going out, they were on the low side of normal. Ramona had refused to eat a sandwich Beverley offered her and Beverley has just found her diabetes kit on her bedroom floor, including her blood tester and jelly beans. Ramona will have no way of measuring her blood glucose levels until she returns home and Beverley says that she doesn’t think Ramona packed any of the jelly beans she needs for quick glucose.

**Discussion prompts**

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| Is immediate action required? Why?  Ramona’s friend makes contact with Beverley at 2am. She is worried that Ramona’s speech is slurred, and she is very sleepy. Beverley calls an ambulance to the friend’s address.  Ramona is stabilised in hospital over the next day and returns home to Beverley.  You are the allocated child protection practitioner. You visit on the day Ramona returns home.  What will you discuss with Ramona and Beverley? | **Notes**  When a diabetic’s insulin levels are too low, they can become very ill and potentially enter a diabetic coma. Chronically mismanagement of insulin levels can cause serious damage.  Beverly understands that Ramona needs urgent medical care. Calling an ambulance is an appropriate action, especially as it is the middle of the night.  As the allocated practitioner you understand that you need to add some more detailed notes on Ramona’s health condition. You meet with Beverley and Ramona to check to see that both Beverley and Ramona are well-informed and supported in relation to Ramona’s diabetes. |

**Find out more about diabetes**

In addition to the [Better Health Channel](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/) < https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/>, the following links provide further detail about diabetes including e-learning modules and fact sheets:

[Diabetes Australia](https://intranet.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/201811/Operation%20staff%20personas.docx?web=1)[https](file:///C:\Users\slus1011\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\L3C7X2X9\https) <https://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/>

[Royal Children’s Hospital](https://www.rch.org.au/diabetes/learning-materials) <https://www.rch.org.au/diabetes/learning-materials/>

[Monash Health](https://monashhealth.org/gps/chronic-disease-services-harp-cdm/diabetes-ambulatory-care-stream) <https://monashhealth.org/gps/chronic-disease-services-harp-cdm/diabetes-ambulatory-care-stream/>

**General health tips**

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| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | While Child protection practitioners are not health experts, it is good practice to consult with health professionals in order to obtain expert advice on what, if any, examination and treatment is required for a child. |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | The role of the care team is critical. Consider the mechanisms in place for sharing relevant information quickly within the team about the health needs of a child or young person. Who is best placed to chair the care team? In complex cases consider the Team Manager or Practice Leader. |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | Where there are acute health concerns, such a diabetes or asthma, always complete a CRIS alert (health) screen to ensure this information is easily accessible to someone who isn’t familiar with the young person and their condition. |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | Using the LAC health screen in CRIS will assist practitioners to focus on a child's health needs regardless of whether they are in out-of-home care. The LAC health domains can be useful prompts for discussion with carers or parents. |
| Ok, Check, Todo, Agenda, Icon, Symbol, Tick, To Do, Gui | [*Healthcare that counts*](https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/specialist-resources/healthcare-counts-framework) <https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/specialist-resources/healthcare-counts-framework>. This is a good resource for child protection practitioners as it contains information on how health services will work with child protection and family services to strengthen and coordinate service provision. |

If you have any feedback or ideas about what you would find useful to include in the bulletin, please [email Office of Professional Practice](mailto:officeofprofessionalpractice@dhhs.vic.gov.au) <officeofprofessionalpractice@dhhs.vic.gov.au>

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