

Mental Health for Parents with Cognitive Impairment accessing Family Services

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Casey*

Struggles to take
in information

Frequently
forgets
appointments

Child has autism
and ADHD

Depression &
anxiety

Family violence



Unstable housing

Financial difficulties

Developmental
history of trauma
& abuse

Single parent

Lack of social
support

► 2018 data ([Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019](#))

- Estimate of 4.4 million Australians have disability (17.7% of the population)
- 6.5% had an intellectual or developmental disorder of this estimate

► 2022 data ([Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2024](#))

- Estimate of 5.5 million Australians have disability (21.4% of the population)

► 2009 data ([Man et al., 2017](#))

- 0.41% of Australian parents were parents with intellectual disability
- 17,000 parents with intellectual disability of an estimate of 212, 000 Australians with intellectual disability

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Steps to Confident Parenting Program



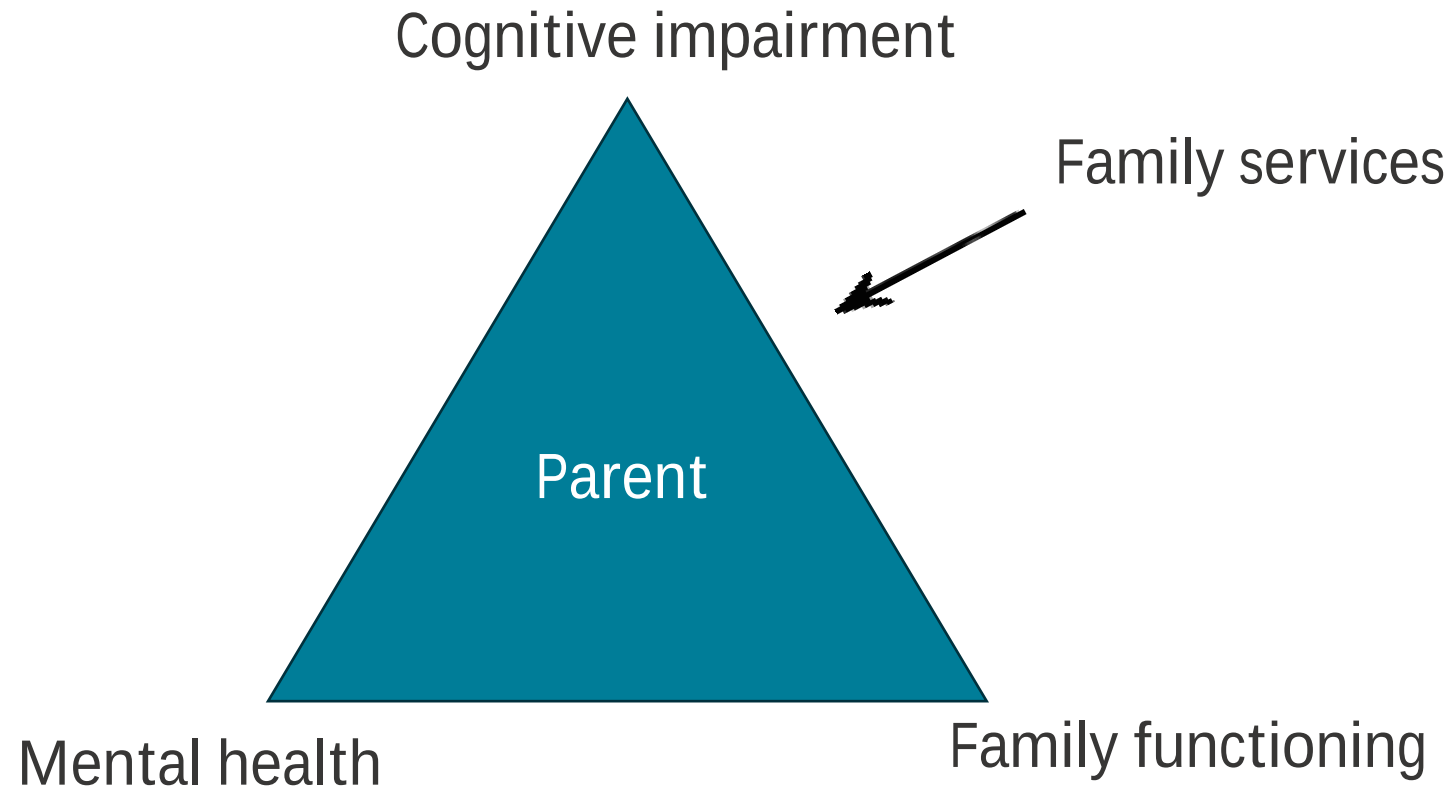
Expand the Parents with Intellectual Disability program to include intensive home-based care and case management. Expand the Steps to Confident Parenting Program to provide early and intensive support for parents with cognitive impairment

What we have done and continue to do:

- The programs:
 - provide wraparound family services
 - offer early parenting and disability support to parents with cognitive impairment or disability
 - offer intensive home-based case management responses
 - keeps families safely together.

Lead division: Children and Families

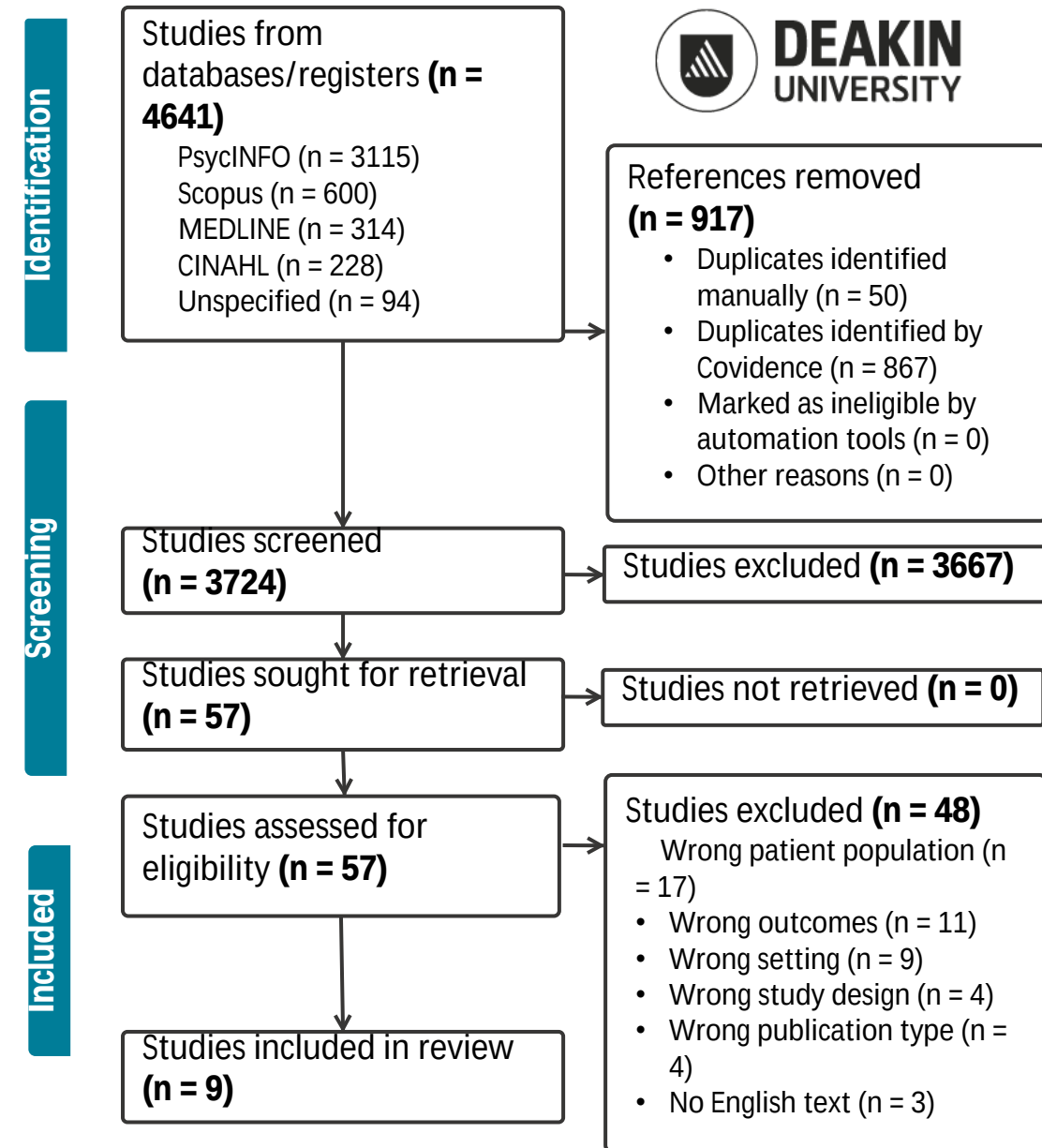




Study 1: Systematic Review

► Aim:

- (1) To explore the extent that parental mental health was examined within parenting intervention programs for parents with cognitive impairment
- (2) To explore the effects of parental mental health on family functioning outcomes, including the contextual, mediating and moderating factors.



Study 1: Systematic Review Results



- Parental mental health impacts child behaviours, child cognitive and mental health outcomes, and parenting style but conflicting information exists.
- Social support plays a key role for parents and can impact and protect parental mental health
- Parental mental health's effects on family functioning outcomes within existing parenting interventions is not reported
- **Conclusions:** Absence of program evaluations that examine parental mental health as a mechanism linked to family functioning outcomes

Study 2: Focus Group Interviews with Practitioners



► Aim:

- (1) To understand practitioner experiences and expertise when working with parents with cognitive impairment within the Steps to Confident Parenting model
- (2) To explore how parental mental health was conceptualised by practitioners and responded to within the se services for parents with cognitive impairment

Participant Characteristics ($n = 15$)

- **Gender:** 100% female
- **Time in role:**
Mean = 3.18 years
- **Employment:**
28.6% employed 4.5 days/week
71.4% employed 5 days/week

Analysis: Inductive Content Analysis

Study 2: Generated qualitative themes

- Individual complexity
- Adjusting planning expectations
- The different roles of family services
- Child protection concerns

- Consequences of mistrust in services
- Consequences of stigma
- Balancing parent agency & autonomy
- Parent engagement
- Parent vulnerability

- Strategies to support parents
- Collaborative goal setting
- Client-led and personalised
- Flexible schedules

- Challenges
 - Stigma impacting mental health
 - Family functioning
 - Mental health impact
- Understanding challenges
 - What parents report to practitioners
 - Practitioners' perspectives

- Navigating accessible support and services
- Suggestions for strengthening mental health service access

Practice environment

Fragmented services, changing services, child protection

Individualised care

Collaborative goals, client-led and personalised, flexible delivery

Complex needs

- Varied presentations
- Adjusting planning expectations

Challenges

- Mistrust of services
- Service stigma
- Autonomy versus protection
- Parent engagement
- Parent vulnerability

Mental health burden

- Parent report
- Family impact
- Practitioner perspective

- ▶ Need for consistent measurement of constructs
- ▶ Importance of assessing both parent and practitioner outcomes
- ▶ Social support is a protective feature for vulnerable families
- ▶ Service delivery should enable practitioners sufficient time
- ▶ Family service initiated mental health screening for parents to established a baseline

Acknowledgements

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Thank you

“it’s not necessarily to do with the diagnosis of intellectual disability itself or cognitive impairment...it’s actually the stigma and societal disadvantages that this cohort face that can cause anxiety and depression.”



References



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