



## Supporting the mental health of children with higher weight online course

Practitioners play an integral role in working with children and parents to prevent or intervene early when mental health difficulties might be emerging. But how we approach this, the language we use and the trust we build with families is important.

### About this course

This course examines practice strategies for supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of children with higher weight. It aims to improve practitioner understanding of the connections between higher weight and mental health in childhood.

### Why was this course developed?

Around 1 in 4 Australian children experience higher weight<sup>1</sup>. And while the causes are varied and complex, it has been found to be one of the most stigmatised conditions for children and their families<sup>2</sup>, resulting in negative mental health outcomes across a lifetime. This course and supporting resources will help you develop an understanding of the links between higher weight and mental health in childhood and build collaborative relationships with children and families. It includes four key practice strategies:

- Addressing weight stigma and bullying
- Supporting the child's best and healthiest life
- Using positive and non-judgmental language; and,
- Developing a team around the child.

These strategies are designed to support practitioners to have sensitive, non-shaming and positive conversations with parents and children to help families overcome stigma and plan for their healthiest life.

### How was this course developed?

This course was developed in collaboration with academic stakeholders, child and family services, practitioners including child mental health experts, and children and parents with lived experience.

### Who is this course for?

The course will support a broad range of practitioners to understand the impact of higher weight on the mental health of children. The course does not offer specific guidance on providing advice about diet or exercise. However, it does provide support for non-stigmatising conversations with children and families who are concerned about weight.

### What is included in the course?

This course features fictional video demonstrations of conversations between practitioners and a family, video interviews with children, practitioners and parents, along with reading materials and reflective activities. It is designed to be undertaken individually, but can also be used as a prompt for conversations between colleagues.

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2020). *Australia's children: Overweight and obesity*. Cat. no. CWS 69. Canberra: AIHW.

2. Puhl, R. & Suh, Y. (2015). Stigma and eating and weight disorders. *Current Psychiatry Reports*, 17(10). 552 doi: 10.1007/s11920-015-0552-6.