

Healthy Start Darwin Program TEHS Factsheet

What is Healthy Start?

Healthy Start is a preventative health literacy and education program for newly arrived refugees in Darwin. It's run as a collaborative effort by doctors and allied health professionals from TEHS and medical students from Flinders University. Educator volunteers have the opportunity to work directly with Melaleuca Refugee centre, cultural support workers and interpreters.



Some of the Healthy Start Darwin team with interpreters, volunteers and program participants outside Flinders Medical School on Royal Darwin Hospital Campus.

Where did Healthy Start originate from?

Healthy Start was established in 2010 in Brisbane based on the simple tried and proven concept—prevention is better than the cure! The best way to address the health issues faced by refugee communities here in Australia is to give them the knowledge and skills for disease prevention. By addressing

inadequacies in general health knowledge and health literacy, Healthy Start creates the foundations for better health in a group that all too often slips through the cracks.

Rallying the support of experts in a number of different organisations including the Multicultural Development Association (MDA), Greater Metro South Brisbane Medicare Local (GMSBML), Refugee Health Queensland (RHQ) and Griffith University, the students created a program that was well researched and focussed. In 2016 Healthy Start was initiated in Darwin led by founder and Director Marrillo Jayasuriya when he commenced a junior medical officer (JMO) role at Royal Darwin Hospital (RDH). Healthy Start Darwin has been led by Maya Wositzky and Sanjay Joseph, JMO's at RDH since 2017 and now in formal partnership with Melaleuca Refugee Centre. Since 2018 all newly arrived refugees to Darwin are mandatorily enrolled in the Healthy Start education day and we aim to have four education days per year and have lots of plans for the future!



Sanjay, Maya and other Healthy Start Darwin volunteers with interpreters and program participants at the April 2018 session.

How does Healthy Start work?

Volunteer educators teach the six modules over the course of an education day. Each module is taught through interpreters in an interactive manner, encouraging questions and discussion, using various props and learning tools. Modules cover a variety of topics including men and women's health, medications, accessing the Australian healthcare system including GP and hospital services, and more. The day also includes a brief orientation and tour of the hospital and communal lunch.



Volunteers delivering the Healthy Eating module of Healthy Start to members of the Congolese community.

Why should I take part?

Pre and post session questionnaires show evidence students, volunteers and refugees can gain so much from the program. Many participants have gained confidence when working with people with a refugee background, culturally and linguistically diverse populations and working with interpreters. Refugees often walk in shy and apprehensive, but leave with an air of hope and acceptance. This is the type of energy that drives change, one that will grant this vulnerable community the opportunity to make their new lives in Australia happier and healthier.

What do I need to do to take part?

Let us know how you would like to be involved by filling out our survey

www.surveymonkey.com/r/NR9DMBC OR email for more information at healthystartdarwin@gmail.com

Please have a look at our facebook page www.facebook.com/groups/695178443914286/ and web site www.healthystart.org.au too!

References

Refugees get a healthy start. Marrillo Jayasuriya. *DoctorQ*, November 2013