

# INFORMATION ABOUT THE NSW CHILD DEVELOPMENT STUDY

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### What is the NSW Child Development Study?

The NSW Child Development Study (NSW-CDS) is a longitudinal study of child mental health and wellbeing in a cohort of children who were assessed using the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) in 2009. The project aims to obtain good quality information about how a population develops during early and middle childhood, in order to map patterns of resilience and vulnerability for later mental health, education, work, and other outcomes. The study is being led by researchers of the University of New South Wales, in collaboration with the Universities of Newcastle, Western Australia, and Canterbury (NZ), and Government partners that include the NSW Department of Education and Communities, NSW Ministry of Health, and the NSW Department of Family and Community Services [Please see: [Who we are](#)].

### Why is the NSW Child Development Study important?

The NSW-CDS is intended to provide much needed information to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Australian children. Results from the NSW-CDS study will be useful to schools, governments, and other organisations to help inform policy developments and influence community-based action to maximise resilience and build mental capacity during critical years of child development. By assessing a whole population cohort, the NSW-CDS can provide unique information about all children's needs, and identify targets for mental health promotion programs relevant to every child, as well as more targeted interventions for vulnerable children. The primary aims are therefore to facilitate effective provision of resources to achieve better mental health and wellbeing outcomes for all Australian children.

### What are the components of the NSW Child Development Study?

There are three active components of the NSW-CDS:

1. A "Record Linkage" study spanning birth to early childhood (age 5 years) [Please see: [Information about Record Linkage 1](#)]: "Record Linkage 1; 2013"
2. A Middle Childhood Survey of mental health and wellbeing of NSW students in Year 6 [Please see: [Information about the MCS](#)]
3. A "Record Linkage" study spanning birth to middle childhood (age 11 years) [Please see: [Information about Record Linkage 2](#)]: "Record Linkage 2; expected 2016"

#### Record Linkage 1:

Record Linkage 1 of the NSW-CDS will provide information about the early childhood years (from birth to 5 years of age) for children who were assessed using the [Australian Early Development Index](#) in 2009. The linkage brings together the AEDI data with information held by other organisations on the children and their parents. This part of the study provides information about children in the EARLY years of development, up to age 5 years. The data will be used to determine factors associated with vulnerability and resilience for a variety of health and educational outcomes in childhood. More detailed information about the Record Linkage 1 is available at [Please see: [Information about Record Linkage 1](#)].

#### Middle Childhood Survey:

The Middle Childhood Survey (MCS) will invite all students enrolled in Year 6, in 2015 to complete an online (internet) survey about their mental health and wellbeing. This is the same cohort of children who were assessed using the AEDI in 2009. The survey will allow children to provide information on their thoughts, feelings, actions, and experiences at a critical age in middle

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childhood. More detailed information about the MCS is available at on the [Information about the MCS page](#).

### Record Linkage 2:

Information obtained from the state-wide 2015 MCS will be combined with information from other organisations via record linkage processes in order to achieve the aims of the study [Please see: [Information about the CDS](#)]. Examples of potential databases that may be requested in future linkage projects include, but are not limited to, children's and parents' records on Health (e.g., information on hospital admissions), Education (e.g., literacy and numeracy skills), Welfare (e.g., information from community services) and Justice (e.g., information on crime statistics).

### How will the information be fed back to the community and policy makers?

Child responses from the MCS in 2015 will be examined on a community basis, to understand patterns of child mental health and wellbeing across the state, and to encourage community and government participation in the planning and provision of essential services for healthy child development. Record linkage studies will provide contextual information within which to interpret children's MCS responses and relate them to health, education, social, and other factors. The MCS data collected during middle childhood, in combination with information from record linkages, will remain useful for many years in helping to identify population predictors in childhood of long-term mental health, education, social, and other outcomes.

### Who is funding the research?

Support for the NSW-CDS is provided from multiple sources, each contributing to different parts of the research study. Commonwealth government funding has been provided by an *Australian Research Council Linkage Project Grant*, and a *National Health and Medical Research Council Project Grant*, with additional funding from an *Australian Rotary Health Research Grant*, and financial and/or in-kind support from the NSW Department of Education and Communities, Ministry of Health, and Department of Family and Community Services.