# Slide 1

## Use of Allied Health Assistants (AHA) to Build Workforce Capacity in Rural and Regional Communities

Louise Jellie, MPower Inc

# Slide 2

## The Allied Health Assistant Project is supported by the Victorian Government



# Slide 3

## MPower Inc

* NFP agency based in south west Victoria, Warrnambool
* 72 staff: includes Disability Support Workers, Family Services, Therapists, Teachers, Assistants and Support staff
* Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) team: 13 therapists, 3 teachers, 3 ECI Assistants, 2 Allied Health Assistant (AHA) Trainees
* ECI supports: groups and 1:1 services,
* Natural environments and centre-based supports

# Slide 4

## Our participants: 0 to 17 years age group

* 29 per cent of participants have Autism
* 41 per cent of participants have Developmental Delay
* 13 per cent of participants have Intellectual Disability
* 17 per cent of participants have other diagnoses

# Slide 5

## Background

* Long waiting lists are a feature of the current participant experience in the South West
* Allied Health Professional recruitment and retention is an ongoing issue in rural and regional communities
* Referrals over time for Mpower have had an upward trend
* NDIS – rural and regional thin markets



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## The AHA Project

* Victorian Regional Readiness Fund: Supporting the NDIS Workforce and Service System (rural and regional)
* Model: AHA Trainees working in the field whilst completing Certificate 4 in Allied Health Assistance
* Partnership with Kyeema Support Services (Portland): Disability Support Worker and playgroup
* Training for existing Allied Health Professional staff: Supervision and Delegation Framework

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## The Traineeship Model

# Traineeship

* Two early career trainees
* 18 months traineeship
* Completing Cert 4 Allied Health Assistance
* Online provider
* Supportive Team environment

# Slide 8

## The AHA Training

### AHA Courses

* Not always available in local communities
* Not plentiful online
* Not disability specific

Covid ….

* Access to online study increased
* Access to “on the job training” decreased

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## What we did learn

We need to look at:

* training of AHA differently
* the needs of AHA trainees
* the needs of the AHP
* the use of DSW – what are we expecting

Training is required for both the AHA and the AHP

# Slide 10

## What we did learn

* Supervision of new trainees takes time
* Change management is needed to introduce a new model to an existing team
* Groups are best to start with opportunities for good modelling and teachable moments
* Not all families want to use AHA as part of their suite of therapies
* Education is needed for families and participants
* Good resources are available for AHPs
* Partnerships with Group Training Providers
* Model works well within an agency

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## Outcomes

* Two new trainees in the service system
* Increase in skills AHP
* Waitlist affected by Covid in 2020
* The in-house training model
* Two new trained AHAs
* Understanding of the AHP - AHA relationship
* Partnership with the traineeship provider

# Slide 12

## From the trainees

### Why apply for the role

* close to home
* family experience because of my brother
* a position I felt I was passionate about
* interested in learning more about kids with disabilities and how they learn,
* I have a passion for children and I want to gain experience with kids in early childhood intervention.

### The Course: Cert 4 in Allied Health Assistance

* very medical
* I have gained an array of new knowledge from OHS standards to medical terminology and the legal side of working with clients
* I am loving it.
* The course work is challenging, but rewarding.
* I’m learning something different every day.

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## From the trainees

### What do you like about the role?

* I love everything about the role, the staff, the activities and tasks, but more importantly I love how rewarding you feel after helping a child learn something or achieve something new. It makes work all the more enjoyable knowing you can help someone or brighten a child’s day.
* I love the role because I get to interact with all kinds of children and I love gaining experience in new areas

### When I finish ….

* My plan after the traineeship would be to work at Mpower in ECIS, have a full time job and gain even more experience in the industry. Allied health will allow me to explore more options but right now I am enjoying what I do at Mpower
* I have no idea what I want to do when I complete the course at this stage but something with kids for sure