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## **Youth Mental Health Screening in Schools – Student Participation** Parent Information and Opt-Out Consent Form

**What is this study about?** We are developing a mental health screening tool for students to do in school. It aims to identify students who may be going through a difficult time and need mental health support.

**What does it involve?** Students in Year 4, 5 and 6 / Year 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 will complete an online survey (about 30 min long) in their school class, that asks them about any negative feelings, behaviours, or difficulties in their life. Students who may need additional support will be confidentially identified to school welfare staff who will inform parents. Students will complete the screening tool for a second time 6-9 months later, so that we can observe changes over time.

**What if my child needs support?** If your child is identified as needing additional support, you will be confidentially notified by school staff. You and your child will be able to work with school staff to find the type of care that best suits your child.

**I would like my child to participate in the mental health screening**

No need to do anything! Your child will automatically be eligible to participate.

**I do not want my child to participate in the mental health screening**

You can opt for your child to not participate by completing the Opt-Out Consent Form on page 3 and returning it to your child's teacher or by replying directly to this email.

**I want to know more**

Please read on for more detail about this study. If you have any questions or would like more information, you can always contact the Research Coordinator, Dr Rebecca Kuhnert, at [rebecca.kuhnert@mq.edu.au](mailto:rebecca.kuhnert@mq.edu.au)

**You or your child can choose to withdraw from the study at any time.** Just notify our Research Coordinator, Dr Rebecca Kuhnert, at [rebecca.kuhnert@mq.edu.au](mailto:rebecca.kuhnert@mq.edu.au) or your child's teacher.

The Centre for Emotional Health at Macquarie University is developing a youth mental health screening tool that will be delivered to students in Year 4 to 11 in schools across NSW. The screening tool will determine whether any young people are going through current difficulties, and a variety of referral options and services will be available to those young people. This project is being conducted in partnership with the NSW Department of Education, Catholic Schools NSW and the Association of Independent Schools NSW, and is funded by the Bupa Health Foundation.

The screening tool will include measures to assess how students are feeling about themselves, their friends, family and school, their body and their life. It will also ask questions about their lifestyle habits. The screening tool takes about 30 minutes to complete and will be administered by a class teacher during class time. Students will complete the screening tool again approximately 6-9 months later (depending on your school's schedule). This will allow us to observe changes in students' mental health over time.

The aim of this screening tool is to detect any students who may be struggling with their emotions or behaviours and may need extra support. These students will be identified through their Student Registration Number by the principal and their parents/carers will be notified. A care plan will be offered for any students who are struggling and include options for support. Your child's school may suggest a specific program or agency to help students with particular difficulties to build their skills in this area or the school might feel they can deal with it themselves.

Some of the questions in the screening tool will ask students to reflect on their mental state and potentially harmful thoughts and behaviours. It is critically important to ask students such questions in order to identify and support those who need help. However, students may find some questions distressing. A list of mental health support services will be provided to all students at the end of the screening tool, and is also available at the end of this form.

Your child does not have to answer any questions they do not want to, and they are free to withdraw at any time and will be reminded of this prior to commencing the screening tool. If your child chooses to withdraw, there will be no adverse consequences and it will not affect any existing or future relationship with Macquarie University or your school. We encourage you to talk with your child about this study and to remind them that they can withdraw at any time without penalty.

This study utilises **opt-out (passive) consent**. This means that your child will participate in the study unless you provide signed consent for them not to participate. We have chosen to use opt-out consent to ensure that as many students as possible have access to mental health screening and any follow-up support they may need. Research demonstrates that when opt-in (active) consent is required, students who are most at risk of emotional distress are disproportionately under-represented (Chartier et al., 2008). Research also shows that asking students about their mental health is seen as valuable by the majority of participants and can lead to significant protection from risk (DeCou & Schuman, 2018; Greene et al., 2020). Thus, using opt-out consent will enable us to reach, and potentially help, more students than using opt-in consent.

To ensure confidentiality, participating students will use a generic login. Only schools will be able to identify students in the data by decoding their Student Registration Number and matching their name. No one else will be able to identify any individual student because all data will only include the Student Registration Number. Information about students needing additional support will be reported to schools under strict confidentiality and will not be shared with anyone other than those students' parents/carers.

Students' responses will be downloaded to a secure server at Macquarie University in a de-identified format. This de-identified data may be used, at a group level, to report outcomes from this project and may be published in scientific papers. No individual will ever be identified for research purposes. In years to come we anticipate this survey will provide us with data to advise programming as well as monitor the emotional health of individuals and cohorts.

Your child's participation in the screening tool is highly encouraged and voluntary. **If you do not wish for your child to participate in this project, please complete the opt-out consent form below.** You can return the form to your child's teacher or respond directly to this email. More information about the survey and the research is available by contacting Dr Rebecca Kuhnert, who is the Research Coordinator for this study, at [rebecca.kuhnert@mq.edu.au](mailto:rebecca.kuhnert@mq.edu.au).

Kind regards,

Professor Ron Rapee (Chief Investigator)

Distinguished Professor and ARC Laureate Fellow, Centre for Emotional Health, Macquarie University

## Parent Opt-Out Consent Form

I have read (or, where appropriate, have had read to me) and understand the information above. Any questions I have asked were answered to my satisfaction. I **do not wish** for my child to participate in the Youth Mental Health Screening Tool.

Student's name:

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(Block letters)

Your name:

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(Block letters)

Your Signature:

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This study has been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee – Reference Number 52021918824322. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email [ethics@mq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@mq.edu.au)). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

## **Mental Health Resources**

If your child is feeling distressed at any time, please contact any of the following free mental health support services. You can also speak to your GP for additional support or referral to local services. If you or someone you care for is in immediate danger, please call 000 or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

### **Lifeline: 131 114**

Lifeline provides 24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services.

### **Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800**

Kids Helpline is a telephone counselling support line for children and young people ages 5 to 25 and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### **Beyond Blue: 1800 512 348**

Beyond Blue has begun providing 24/7 mental health support, both online and by phone, delivered by mental health professionals (in conjunction with Medibank). It is providing information and advice around coping with COVID-19, isolation and connection, workplace and financial hardship, and how best to support the mental health of others.

### **NSW Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511**

A mental health professional will answer your call about mental health concerns for you or someone you are concerned about, including children, teens, adults and older people.

### **Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467**

This is a national service that provides free 24/7 phone, video and online professional counselling to people who are affected by suicide.

### **National Indigenous Critical Response Service: 1800 805 801**

National Indigenous Critical Response Service provides emotional and practical support to bereaved families and individuals impacted by suicide or other traumatic loss. Advocates are experienced in listening and providing culturally responsive support.

### **Carers NSW: 1800 242 636**

Carers NSW provides information, education and support for carers, including carer support groups (open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).