

## teen Mental Health First Aid for students in Years 7-9

### Information for Parents and Guardians

#### About the project

The Melbourne School of Population and Global Health at the University of Melbourne, and Mental Health First Aid Australia (MHFA), are conducting research on a new skills-based program, called teen Mental Health First Aid for students in Years 7-9 (abbreviated to tMHFA). The project involves presenting tMHFA in schools to Year 8 students, with the aim of evaluating the course content and materials to ensure it is effective and enjoyable for students. The training component has been embedded into the school's curriculum, while the evaluation (research) component is not part of the curriculum and is additional to the training.

#### What is Mental Health First Aid?

Mental health first aid is the help offered to a person developing a mental health problem, experiencing a worsening of an existing mental health problem or in a mental health crisis, until appropriate professional help is received or until the crisis resolves. Mental health first aid strategies are taught in training courses developed and conducted by Mental Health First Aid Australia. MHFA programs have solid evidence for their effectiveness from many research studies and MHFA has won multiple awards. For more information, you can visit [www.mhfa.com.au](http://www.mhfa.com.au).

#### What is tMHFA?

tMHFA is a new program that involves the delivery of three 75 minute training sessions to students in Year 8. tMHFA teaches students how they can help a friend with a mental health problem. The program is designed to develop their knowledge and skills in:

- recognising warning signs that a friend is developing a mental health problem;
- understanding how to talk to a friend about mental health and seeking help;
- when and how to tell a responsible adult;
- where to find appropriate and helpful resources about mental illness and professional help; and
- how to respond in a crisis situation.

tMHFA contains a multimedia presentation, videos, a workbook and learning activities. The program will be presented to Year 8 classes by a trained MHFA instructor. The regular class teacher or school welfare coordinator will also be present during the training sessions. The training and materials will be provided free of charge to your child and their school.

tMHFA for students in Years 10-12, a companion course for tMHFA for students in Years 7-9, was developed in 2012 and is now running in schools across Australia. tMHFA for students in Years 10-12 has been evaluated in two large studies involving approximately 1500 students. The first study found positive outcomes, including improved mental health of students. The second study will conclude in 2017.

#### What is the purpose of this research?

Because this is the first time tMHFA for students in Years 7-9 has been run in schools, we would like to gather feedback from students, parents/guardians and teachers about how effective the program is in teaching students about mental health problems and how to help their friends. We would also like to know what they think of the program. This evaluation will help us improve the content of the training, so it can be used in schools across Australia and internationally.

### **Who is conducting this research?**

This research is being conducted by a team from the University of Melbourne and MHFA Australia. The Ian Potter Foundation has provided \$47,000 to fund this project. Three of the investigators on this project are employees of MHFA, a not-for-profit organisation, and another is chair of its board.

### **What will the research involve for students?**

Students will be asked to complete three surveys: one before tMHFA is presented, one after they have completed the program, and one 3 months after the training has finished. They will be asked questions about mental health, mental health problems (such as depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts) and mental health first aid to understand whether and how their knowledge changes over time. The surveys will be completed online and it is estimated they will each take around 25 minutes to do. Students will complete the questionnaires during class time.

### **Does my child have to participate?**

The training sessions will be presented to all students in Year 8 during normal class hours. Participation in the research surveys is voluntary and students can attend the training without having to complete the surveys. Attendance at the training or participation in the evaluation will not impact on your child's regular school assessments, and students will not be penalised in any way for non-attendance or non-participation.

### **How do I give consent for my child to participate?**

The tMHFA training is part of the school's curriculum, and therefore does not require parental consent for your child to participate. The evaluation (research) component is not part of the curriculum and therefore requires parents to consent to their child's participation. The research component uses a passive method of consent (also known as "opt-out" consent). This means that the parent/guardian does not have to sign a consent form for their child to participate in the research. Page 5 of this form is an "Opportunity to Opt Out" form, which can be filled in and returned to the school if you do not wish for your child to participate. If the school does not receive an opt-out form from you as the parent/guardian before the survey sessions commence (about three weeks from when you receive this information sheet; please check with your school for exact dates), it will be assumed that you consent for your child to participate in the research. Students will also be asked at the beginning of each survey whether they would like to participate (this is called assent), and they can choose to opt out at this point. Parent/guardian consent is not required for the training component, as it will be presented in normal class times to the entire grade. If you do not wish for your child to participate in the training, please contact the school so that alternative activities can be arranged.

### **Is participation in this research confidential?**

The tMHFA program will be presented during students' normal class times. This means that student identities cannot be kept completely anonymous from the program instructor or the research manager, who will be present at the sessions. However, all information provided when responding to the surveys is confidential. All the results from the surveys will be published in the form of group percentages, or in a non-identifiable format (e.g., quotes may be published, but they will not contain any identifying information). Students' responses will be stored electronically and held under password protection for a minimum period of 5 years. The data will not be used for any purposes other than those described here.

Surveys will be distributed to students in one of two ways, depending on the school's preference: they will be emailed to your child's email address by their school, or they will be linked on the school's intranet. Hard

copies of the surveys will also be available if needed.

Students are not required to provide their names to the researchers at any stage of this research. Students will, however, be asked for their student identification number (e.g. AND0001) at the beginning of each survey. This is for two reasons: to be able to match students' survey responses over time, and to ensure students' safety. If a student becomes distressed and need assistance, their student ID enables the researchers to inform the school's wellbeing/welfare team so that the student can be followed up without needing to disclose their identity. Student ID numbers will be removed from the surveys once the research team have collected and matched up students' data (this is called de-identification).

While every effort will be made to protect the identity of participants, there are legal limitations to data confidentiality. For instance, it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena or a freedom of information request. However, all data will be retained in a non-identifiable format, and will not be used in other studies.

### **What if I change my mind?**

Participation in this research is voluntary. You can cease your child's participation in the tMHFA training sessions, or the surveys, at any time. You can also withdraw your child's data at any point until we remove their student ID from their responses. After this time, we will not be able to tell their responses apart from anyone else's. If you decide to withdraw, all of your child's data will be immediately deleted. You can withdraw your child's data by contacting the research manager, Dr Kathy Bond ([kathybond@mhfa.com.au](mailto:kathybond@mhfa.com.au)).

### **How will the outcome/results of this research be made public?**

The findings of this research will be published in scientific journals, on the Mental Health First Aid website ([www.mhfa.com.au](http://www.mhfa.com.au)) and in training materials. The results may also be presented and discussed at local, national and international conferences on youth mental health, or mental health first aid.

### **Are there any risks?**

Some people find attending Mental Health First Aid training a little distressing because it can be difficult to think and talk about mental illness. However, most participants also report benefits from having learnt about how they can help others with a mental illness. A number of resources, such as helplines and websites will be given to your child before and after the tMHFA training. The school's wellbeing coordinator or regular class teacher will also be present during the training sessions, and students and parents can speak with them at any time before, during or after the surveys and training.

If you or your child are distressed about the issues discussed in the training, or in the surveys, there are several services available for you to contact, including Lifeline (13 11 14) and Beyondblue ([www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)). Alternatively, you can email the research manager, Dr Kathy Bond ([kathybond@mhfa.com.au](mailto:kathybond@mhfa.com.au)).

### **What are the benefits?**

Students will receive the tMHFA training free of charge, and be taught a range of skills for assisting their friends if a mental health problem begins. They will receive a workbook and a certificate of completion at the end of the training.

You and your child's teachers will also have the opportunity to participate in Youth Mental Health First Aid, a course which teaches adults how to help a young person who may be developing a mental health problem, and this will also be provided free of charge. The school will advise you of the dates of this course.

The survey responses will help MHFA Australia to develop a training package of the highest possible quality. If tMHFA is found to be effective, the training package will be used by MHFA in the future. Participation in this research will therefore benefit future students across Australia and internationally, who receive the tMHFA training. In addition, this project has the potential to lead to better community support for young people who are developing or experiencing a mental health problem, by providing guidance to the friends, family, and school staff who care for them.

### **Who can I contact if I want more information?**

If you'd like any more information about the project, you can contact:

Dr Kathy Bond

[kathybond@mhfa.com.au](mailto:kathybond@mhfa.com.au), 03 9079 0207

Kathy is the research manager for the tMHFA pilot study, based at Mental Health First Aid Australia. She is the first point of contact for queries related to this research.

If you would like more information about the scientific aspects of this project, you can contact:

Professor Tony Jorm

[ajorm@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:ajorm@unimelb.edu.au), 03 9035 7799

Tony is a Professorial Fellow and NHMRC Senior Principal Research Fellow with the University of Melbourne's Population Mental Health Group, and is a Senior Investigator on the tMHFA program evaluation.

If you would like more information about MHFA or the tMHFA program, you can contact:

Dr Claire Kelly

[clairek@mhfa.com.au](mailto:clairek@mhfa.com.au), 03 9079 0203

Claire is the Youth Programs Manager at Mental Health First Aid Australia. She is responsible for training and supporting tMHFA instructors.

The other investigators on this project are Dr Laura Hart ([lhart@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:lhart@unimelb.edu.au)), Dr Alyssia Rossetto ([alyssia.rossetto@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:alyssia.rossetto@unimelb.edu.au)) and Ms Betty Kitchener ([bettyk@mhfa.com.au](mailto:bettyk@mhfa.com.au)).

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne (Ethics ID Number 1647390.1). If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Office for Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010, Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Fax: +61 3 9347 6739 or Email: [HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au). All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.

## tMHFA Opportunity to Opt Out Form

### Parents/Guardians of Students

**PLEASE NOTE:** Your details are required on this form only if you wish for your child ***not to be involved*** in the research. All students will take part in the training; this form provides the opportunity for you to withdraw your child from the research component. The research involves the completion of three questionnaires. For more information about the research and method of obtaining consent, please see the attached information sheet.

If you are happy for your child to be involved in the training and the research, you do not need to do anything. The school will arrange your child's participation.

**If you do not consent to your child participating in the research, please fill out the section below and return it to the school.**

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**I do not consent to my child participating in this research.**

Your child's full name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your full name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:                    /        / 201\_\_