

Kids Helpline @ School (KAS) is a free early intervention program available to all Australian primary and high schools. The program uses tertiary qualified Kids Helpline counsellors and video conferencing technology to engage students in evidence-informed sessions that promote student emotional literacy, resilience building, digital safety and citizenship, coping strategies, and help-seeking behaviours. KAS aims to increase awareness of Kids Helpline services as well as to build on student ability to tackle challenges impacting their mental health and wellbeing. In 2023, KAS reached 47,400 primary school students and 7,420 high school students through sessions booked by school staff, with more than 90% of participants able to identify pathways to support as a result of the session (Kids Helpline Impact Report, 2023). Kids Helpline @ School are a Trusted eSafety Provider, receiving endorsement based on our experience, alignment with best practice and working with children safeguards.

Kids Helpline @ School session content is Australian National Curriculum V9 aligned and designed as group-based skill building and psychoeducation rather than a direct intervention for mental health and wellbeing issues or group counselling. These engaging sessions can offer students a positive first experience of mental health services through speaking directly with a Kids Helpline counsellor about topics relevant to them, which may help to overcome common barriers to help-seeking through demystifying and normalising counselling.

“My students and I reflected on the session after it concluded and I got a strong sense that they felt positive about tackling disagreements with friends and they left the session feeling supported that they could call a helpline if they needed additional support.”

(Teacher, Grade 3, VIC)

Key features of Kids Helpline @ School

- Free program available to every primary and high school
- No limit to how many sessions a school can book
- Curriculum-aligned sessions, tailored and adjusted to meet the needs of the student, age group and community
- Sessions designed to be fun, interactive, and educational for students
- The support doesn't stop after the session ends - Kids Helpline also offers continuity of care/ongoing regular counselling for weeks, months and even years if needed
- Trauma-informed program. Our facilitators are all tertiary qualified professional counsellors - giving students the opportunity to learn the best evidence-informed strategies directly from a Kids Helpline counsellor

Risk of harm

The goal is to create a safe and comfortable space during the session. If anything of concern is shared throughout the session by one of the students, we will not explore this further because of the group setting. The comment will be validated, contained and then we will contact the teacher either through email or phone call after the session.



Summarised Risk Assessment

Identified Risk	KAS example/scenario	Mitigation
<p>Security of video conferencing platforms used for Virtual Classroom Sessions and student interaction on these platforms</p>	<p>KAS staff as part of their job access video conferencing platforms and host/join online platforms to video conference with schools around Australia.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure video conferencing platforms (assessment of platforms was undertaken in April 2020) are used to connect with schools and students and for all sessions. Platforms are hosted by either school or KAS and students are not provided with links to KAS session spaces - teachers are communicated this when discussing possibility for remote sessions.
<p>Physical Safety of Students/Young People during KAS sessions</p>	<p>Within our role, we are connecting in virtually and having conversation with diverse young people from different backgrounds, who may have experienced trauma and may have developmental or learning needs and are not physically in the classroom space.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For all sessions, there should always be a staff member/school representative present (as discussed in the pre-session consultation) with the same space as students participating within the classroom and are encouraged to follow their school's Duty of Care/Risk of Harm management plans if something were to occur within the session space.
<p>Duty of Care or Risk of Harm disclosure ensuring the ways that a KAS team member responds to RoC/DoC disclosures aligns with best-practice.</p>	<p>Within KAS sessions, there are times within sessions where there are Q&A opportunities for students and the sessions all involve moments where students are encouraged to share and participate within the session – at times this sharing may involve risk or a duty of care disclosure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All sessions are facilitated by our facilitators are all tertiary qualified professional counsellors who are skilled in mitigating risk and acting protectively within the session. Boundary setting at the start of all sessions, opt-out during housekeeping, explain RoH/DoC to teachers/bookers during pre-session consultation, RoH/DoC process is followed, follow-up email sent to teacher/booker flagging disclosure. Support is available for all participating students through free counselling with Kids Helpline.
<p>Program/activity will be working with children, young people or adults at risk who have experienced past trauma/conflict/disasters</p>	<p>We identify that any young person participating within a session may have experienced trauma within their life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Facilitators required to have tertiary qualifications and to have a valid Working With Children Clearance and Police Check. For all sessions, there should always be a staff member/school representative present (as discussed in pre-session consultation). Programs have a risk of harm management procedure in place and any duty of care concerns (e.g., distressed student) are followed up with the booker and teacher per this plan. For any disclosures in sessions, protective interruption is used. For all sessions our risk management and duty of care procedures/expectations are shared with school staff. Programs are early intervention whole-of-school approach – content is directed and written for a universal audience and not targeted for children and young people at risk. For sessions with a trauma background indicated, we encourage to change session topic to the Introduction to Kids Helpline module or encourage a short introduction to Kids Helpline to be done at start of session. In some cases - if the rationale of why the teacher has booked does not align with "early intervention" or the session is being booked in response to a traumatic event, the counsellor will talk through our professional recommendations within the pre-session consultation. If any significant risks are identified in the booking form or pre-session consultation, a Senior Practice Supervisor (SPS) is consulted to ensure management of distress or risk to children and young people. May request a school guidance officer or counsellor to attend pre-session consultation when risk is identified in booking form and if session is to go ahead - it is encouraged that counsellor/guidance officer/wellbeing leader also is present for session to further support students as needed.