

Raise Foundation Update - COVID-19

1 September 2020



Our commitment to you

We would like to reassure everyone in the Raise village that the safety of the young people in our programs, our volunteer mentors and our staff team remains our top priority in our response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to be guided by notifications and restrictions advised by the [Department of Health](#) and the schools with whom we work. Now, more than ever, vulnerable young Australians need trusted adult mentors to guide them through these challenging times. Our aim in this update is to provide you with clear and timely messaging about the actions we are currently taking in response to COVID-19.

How is COVID-19 Impacting Australian Youth?

COVID-19 has been declared a global pandemic, and meets the criteria for being a natural disaster because of the potential for significant and lasting damage to mental health for children and the adults who support them (Walters, 2020; Dvorsky, Breaux & Becker, 2020). We know from past disasters that many effects emerge up to 3 years post-disaster (Walters, 2020). Immediate and longer-term responses are needed to mitigate the impact on our young people's future.

It is estimated that up to 15% of children will experience significant mental health symptoms following exposure to an event such as COVID-19 (Cullen et al, 2000), with many more who struggle to readapt without reaching critical status. COVID-19 is a financial crisis as well as a health and wellbeing crisis. Those in disadvantaged households will be most impacted. ARACY suggest that the disruption to education may have long-lasting consequences for students from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

The social support that young people receive will make a big difference in how much they are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Reducing risk and building up resilience processes is critical in responding to the crisis (Zhou et al 2020; Dvorsky, Breaux & Becker, 2020; Coe & Enomoto, 2020, Shean, 2020). Young people need supportive caring and competent adults who can help alleviate feelings of anxiety and provide strategies such as supportive listening, counselling and building resilience (Shean, 2020).

This is where mentoring will play an important role.

What's happening in the Raise Village?

Our People

Raise remains in an excellent position to continue working remotely during this time of social distancing and self-isolation across the various States and working from home continues to be our preference. Where there is a requirement to come together as a group, some members of our team may work from the Raise Sydney office, with ongoing health and safety measures in place including distancing, hand sanitizing and extra cleaning. Our Melbourne office is restricted by the current Stage 4 lockdown conditions in place in Victoria.

We continue to gather online as a whole organisation on a monthly basis to ensure continuity across all activity as well as internal and external online communications throughout this period, and our individual teams are meeting online on a regular basis to remain connected. Raise is receiving the Federal Government’s Job Keeper support and 48 Raise staff are eligible for the Job Keeper allowance. As such, we have been able to maintain our pre-COVID-19 workforce.

Our Programs

Recognising that our young people need us more than ever, we have adapted our mentoring programs for online delivery, with our Youth Safety Framework and best practice mentoring benchmarks at the forefront of program design and delivery. We have consulted with our school partners, Federal Department of Health, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, State Education Departments, other NFPs working in the youth wellbeing space and our Corporate Partners to determine the best models for mentoring that will allow us to continue supporting our mentees’ social and emotional wellbeing during these uncertain times.

We are liaising regularly with all our school partners and agreed their program delivery preference. Given the range of restrictions and health guidelines across our different states, Raise is currently running four modes of delivery for our mentoring programs:

1. **In-School Mentoring (Ismo and Youth Frontiers)** – our usual weekly, one-to-one, face-to-face mentoring program for a minimum of 15 weeks, hoping for the full 20-week curriculum
2. **Online Mentoring** – weekly online mentoring facilitated by our qualified Program Counsellors where matches use the break-out room feature of Zoom, reverting to face-to-face as soon as possible
3. **Youth Initiated Mentoring (“YIM”) with Program Counsellor** – weekly online or face-to-face sessions where our qualified Program Counsellors facilitate the YIM curriculum with selected students
4. **Program Counsellor as Mentor** – weekly online mentoring sessions with our qualified Program Counsellors who mentor young people who are most at risk if mentors are not allowed on site

The following tables outline the number of programs we are delivering across Australia. Of the 100 programs planned prior to COVID-19, **we currently have 74 programs being delivered, reaching 920 young people.**

Pre-COVID vs Post-COVID Snapshot

2020 Programs	No. of Programs Planned	No. of Matches Planned	No. of Mentors Ready Pre-Covid	No. of Programs Now Post-Covid	No. of Matches Now Post-Covid
NSW	56	840	799	47	643
VIC	21	315	254	7	66
QLD	11	165	131	10	99
WA	2	30	30	1	14
SA	4	60	43	4	45
Bump National	6	78	64	5	53
TOTAL	100	1,488	1,321	74	920

Program Summary as at 31 August 2020

2020 Programs	Online	Face to Face T2	Face to Face T3	YIM T3	PC Mentor	Postponed	TOTAL
NSW	16	14	16	1	0	12	59
VIC	6	0	0	0	1	14	21
QLD	0	0	8	2	0	1	11
WA	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
SA	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
Bump National	3	0	2	0	0	0	5
TOTAL	25	19	26	3	1	28	102

Our best practice face-to-face mentoring model remains our first preference for program delivery but we recognise the need for young people to feel heard, valued and supported, now more than ever. The above adjustments are allowing as many mentoring programs to be delivered as possible.

Mentor Recruitment and Training

Mentor Recruitment for our 2021 programs will open on Monday 14 September and training for our new volunteer Mentors will commence from October 2020. Raise Youth Mentor Training Courses will be delivered virtually until further notice, and at least for the remainder of 2020.

Our Partnerships and Fundraising

Raise needs to recoup lost funds of almost \$1million due to our inability to host any of our fundraising events this year and some partners being unable to support us, and these were key sources of funding to ensure our mentoring programs can operate in 2020. Our approach has been across several special initiatives:

- Our **Sparkle Ball** was due to be held on 11 September, but we are unable to come together this year so we are asking you to [please donate at this link if you are able to](#). Just giving the cost of your ticket, a suit or dress, an uber, or what you would have donated in buying an auction prize would bring more mentors to vulnerable young people right now
- We held a **Digital Fundraising Campaign** on our website at the end of the financial year, and every dollar donated was matched by our generous partners at Zurich Australia
- We continue to seek **emergency funding support from our principal partners** if available, and our very generous partners at Goodman Foundation and Macquarie Foundation have helped so far
- We are appealing for **urgent major gifts from our individual supporters** to help ensure that Raise mentoring programs can still be delivered this year, and many families have generously stepped in for us
- Hosted our annual **Patron's Lunch as an online webinar** with special guest speaker David Gonski AC, encouraging many supporters to donate earlier for us, which made a huge difference

Summary

- Covid-19 will have a significant and lasting impact on young people's mental health with effects expected to continue up to 3 years post-Covid-19
- Raise is here to support youth mental health and wellbeing throughout COVID-19 and beyond
- Our mentoring programs can be delivered safely online, face-to-face or in a blend of online and face-to-face, so that whatever restrictions are in place in the community, we are able to continue mentoring young people and keep our volunteers, employees and mentees safe
- Raise is registered as a COVID Safe business in NSW and is committed to achieving the same status in all states that we operate in
- Raise has implemented a "Return to Face-to-Face Mentoring Policy" that clearly sets out the safety procedures that must be in place for face-to-face mentoring programs to proceed during COVID-19
- Raise Mentor Training will be delivered online until further notice
- Raise continues to need financial support to recoup lost funds as a result of COVID-19

Please Remember....

In accordance with the latest Department of Health advice, we continue to encourage all our staff team and volunteer mentors to continue:

- practicing good hygiene (hand washing, coughing/sneezing into elbow, avoiding shaking hands)
- monitoring for symptoms (fever, coughing, shortness of breath or tiredness and:
 - if you are unwell or concerned that you may have been exposed to COVID-19 please seek testing as soon as possible
 - if you have been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 please self-isolate for 14 days from the date of your last contact with the confirmed case
 - advise Raise as soon as possible if you are diagnosed with the virus and due to participate in one of our programs or visit one of our offices or team members

Thank You

In spite of the extreme challenges we have all been enduring over the last six months, we are so encouraged by the way our country and the Raise village continues to come together.

We are so inspired that there were 1,321 volunteer Raise Mentors prepared to step in and support vulnerable young people in March. We are doing everything possible to ensure we continue mentoring as many young people as we can right now, and we are conscientiously planning so we can mentor 2,500 more young people in 2021, as they are going to really need our support.

Our very sincere thanks to you all for your continued patience and generous support through this extremely rough year. We sincerely appreciate you staying with us while we continue working hard with courage for our vulnerable young people.

Please take care of yourselves and each other

If you have any questions or suggestions, please email us at hello@raise.org.au