



READING THE PLAY

Mentally Healthy Sporting Club Guidelines



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This framework contains information, tips and resources to help you, your club and your members to navigate mental health. You may find some of the resources helpful and informative, but if you or anyone you know requires any urgent support, you should contact;

Lifeline on 13 11 14

Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

If it's an emergency, call 000.

Why is support for mental health and wellbeing in community sport important?

Community sport offers an ideal space to support mental health and wellbeing, particularly for young people. Sports play a central role in Australian culture and this is reflected in the fact that many young people participate in organised sport.

Participation in sport can have direct benefits for physical and mental health by encouraging regular exercise along with providing an opportunity for a sense of community and wellbeing to be cultivated (Orygen, 2019).

Community support offers an ideal space to support Mental Health within local communities, particularly for young people. It often provides a safe space and a trusted network where people feel socially connected.

High numbers of young people participate in organised sport, meaning that clubs, leagues and associations can provide an important context outside schools where positive messages, mental health education and guidance regarding support services can be provided.

These guidelines were developed in 2021 as part of the 'Leaders for Geelong' project in partnership with Committee for Geelong, AFL Barwon and Read the Play.



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Thank you to our partners and supporters



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Mentally Healthy Sporting Club Guidelines

About Read the Play

Read the Play (RTP) is Geelong based a charity focusing on mental health support for young people in sporting clubs.

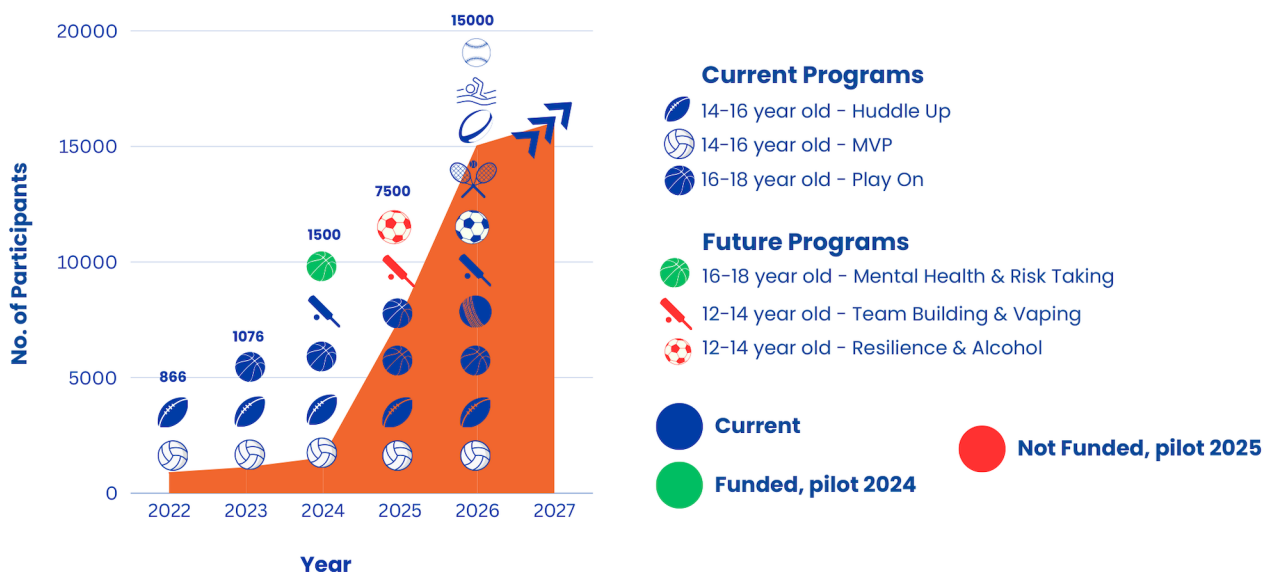
RTP offers programs promoting mental health and wellbeing, utilising sports as a platform for positive change with their initiatives aiming to educate and empower young people, fostering healthier communities in the Geelong region.

RTP aims to improve the mental health literacy and help-seeking behaviours of young people by way of a fun, interactive games-based session at their sporting club. The RTP programs are designed to increase young people's knowledge and understanding of mental health and mental illness, facilitate an environment where mental health difficulties are not negatively judged, and thereby promote positive help-seeking behaviours.

RTP offers several different mental health literacy programs to sporting clubs, including programs designed to be delivered directly to young people, as well as resources and programs designed to support club officials, coaches and parents within sporting communities.

2024-2026 Strategy: Target 15,000

In 2026 we will deliver a full suite of programs covering the ages of 12-18 years to more than 15,000 young people in sporting clubs in the Geelong region, for free.



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Clubs, Coaches and Officials

Why selecting the right mental health and wellbeing program is vital

There is a rapidly increasing number of organisations offering mental health and wellbeing support services to sports organisations in Victoria, from guest talks to education programs.

Clubs have a duty of care to ensure that the providers they select are safe and do no harm to the health and wellbeing of their participants. Selecting the right Mental Health & program provider is vital and will enable you to deliver the best possible program and support to your members.



Geelong Amateur Football Netball Club
Player Wellbeing Officer, Patrick Kopke with
Geelong West Giants PWO, Adam Vaughan.

How do we become a mentally healthy sporting Club?

Becoming a mentally healthy sporting club doesn't have to be a new initiative that clubs spend time and resources supporting – most clubs are already doing work in this area. This document is designed to help identify what you are already doing, opportunities to broaden your offering and how you share this information with your members.

It's about a way of thinking, it's about your culture and it's recognising that sporting clubs are a great place to help break down stigma and start conversations about mental health. The following process and checklist have been designed to make it easier to step through what can be a confusing space.



Mentally Healthy Sporting Club Guidelines

SUPPORTING MENTALLY HEALTHY SPORTING CLUBS

A checklist for community-based sporting organisations

RAISE AWARENESS

- ☐ Do you promote mental health and wellbeing on socials?
- ☐ Does your club have connections to local mental health providers? If so, what providers?

BUILD A CULTURE OF SUPPORT

- ☐ Has your club experienced any mental health crisis events?
- ☐ Does your club have player wellbeing officers? If so, how many?
- ☐ Have they completed Read the Play's online training?
- ☐ Has your club provided mental health awareness training to coaches and committee members?
- ☐ Do you display Mental Health awareness posters such as Read the Play in the clubrooms?

IDENTIFY CHAMPIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH IN YOUR CLUB

- ☐ Does your club promote mental health champions amongst your own club?
- ☐ Does your club have policies in place relevant to health and wellbeing?
- ☐ Does your club discuss mental health and identified risks for your club at club meetings?

OPEN LINES OF COMMUNICATION

- ☐ Does your club run Read the Play sessions?
- ☐ Does your club take part in Read the Play round?
- ☐ Does your club ensure support is available from multiple people within the club?

ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

- ☐ Does your club emphasise sport is about enjoyment?
- ☐ Does your club follow up with families when young people disengage?

EMBRACE DIVERSITY

- ☐ Does your club have policies/procedures in place to address bullying, racism, vilification, or intimidation?
- ☐ Are policies/procedures easily accessible to all members?
- ☐ Does your club consult with young people about what will help them feel included?
- ☐ Does your club have processes to welcome new people and offer support?

BUILD LINKS TO EXTERNAL SUPPORTS

- ☐ Does your club understand what external wellbeing services can offer and how you can collaborate?
- ☐ Does your club compile a list of key wellbeing supports on your website and keep this up to date?



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Understanding Mental Health

Mental health affects the way people think, feel and act. Taking care of our mental health is just as important as having a healthy body.

Signs to look for

MENTAL HEALTH SPECTRUM



GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

- Experiencing a full range of emotions, the good and bad.
- Coping with normal life stressors.
- Engaging meaningfully with your community.



POOR MENTAL HEALTH

- Increased stress in life
- Feeling overwhelmed, sad, frustrated.
- Maintaining relationships, joyful activities and responsibilities is more difficult.



MENTAL ILLNESS

- A diagnosable condition that impacts a person's thoughts behaviours and emotions
- May significantly impact a person's ability to maintain relationships, joyful activities and cope with stress

Common warning signs:

- Moodiness and irritability
- Loss of interest in life and previously enjoyable activities
- Withdrawing from friendships and family
- Changes in appetite
- Excessive or reduced sleep
- Lack of energy and motivation
- Difficulties with memory and concentration
- Mind racing
- Butterflies in your stomach
- Restless
- Panic attacks, increased heart rate, shortness of breath



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Read the Play Programs

One in four young Australians (12–24yo) will experience a mental illness in any one year and research indicates that lack of mental health literacy may increase the risk of mild/moderate mental health conditions.

14–16 year old programs

Huddle Up:

Cyber bullying is a significant contributor to mental ill health with 88% of adolescents reporting experiencing cyberbullying (Lenhart et al. 2011).

Huddle up is a community-based program for young adolescents, that aims to increase knowledge on mental health, promote help seeking behaviour and influence beliefs and attitudes related to identifying and responding to their peers who may be at risk of mental ill-health or cyber bullying.



MVP:

Suicide is the leading cause of death in young Australian 14–24 years old and research indicates that people do not have the confidence or knowledge to appropriately respond to a peer having suicidal thoughts.

MVP is a community-based program for young adolescents, that aims to increase knowledge on mental health, promote help seeking behaviour and influence beliefs and attitudes related to identifying and responding to their peers who may be at risk of mental ill-health or suicide.





We've got you



The APCO Foundation
Fueling kindness in local APCO communities
for over **10 years**



Mentally Healthy Sporting Club Guidelines

16-18 year old programs

Play On:

The AIHW National Drug Strategy Survey has indicated that 26.4% of Australians over the age of 14 years have exceeded safe alcohol consumption for single-occasion risk in the past year. Specifically, young Australians are far more likely to drink in harmful amounts than the rest of the adult population.

Play On is a community-based program for adolescents, that aims to increase mental health literacy and knowledge of the impact underage alcohol use can have on mental health outcomes within local sporting communities. The program has a strong focus on influencing beliefs and attitudes towards underage drinking and increasing confidence in being able to respond to peers who may benefit from support for their drug and alcohol use.



Take A Chance:

Research has shown that certain mental health disorders, such as depression and anxiety, often co-occur with risk-taking behaviors in adolescents and young adults.

Take a Chance is a community-based program for adolescents that aims to increase mental health literacy and knowledge of the impact that poor mental health outcomes can have on decision making and risk taking within local sporting communities. The program has a strong focus on understanding why young people take risks and teaching the skills to assess risks, acknowledging that it's great to try new things and to be mindful of consequences and staying safe.



12-14 Year Old Programs

Read the Play is currently developing two team building and resilience programs for young adolescent participants across the Barwon region. The programs will support our youngest teens to build resilience, support each other; whilst also providing health promotion and prevention messaging targeting early initiation of vaping/smoking and alcohol use.





Mentally Healthy Sporting Club Guidelines

Player Wellbeing Officers

As a component of the Read the Play program, each club is required to identify a Player Wellbeing Officer (PWO) who will then play an integral role in maintaining wellbeing at the club. Player Wellbeing Officers participate in training which equips them with mental health knowledge. They are encouraged to become supporters for young people identified as having, or potentially developing a mental health program, and guiding them to appropriate sources of help. PWOs are not mental health clinicians and the training undertaken aims to enhance their knowledge of mental health, equipping them to have positive conversations and ultimately ensuring that they are able to direct the young person to the appropriate supports as required.

The Player Wellbeing Officer at a sporting club plays an integral role in maintaining wellbeing at a sporting club. Belonging to a sporting club provides a sense of community, safety and comradery for a young person, whilst also providing them an outlet to engage in physical activity and social support. In their role as a PWO, they may need to:



A SAFE SPACE

People who take on the role of PWO want to help and support you. They offer a safe space to touch base.



SPEAK UP

PWOs are there to talk to if you have concerns for a team mate or friend.



ACCESS HELP

Your club PWO can help guide you and support you to access support for your mental health.



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 **GMHBA**

**Player
Wellbeing
Officer**



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Mentally Healthy Sporting Club Guidelines

How to book your Read the Play session

- Online at www.readtheplay.org.au
- For further information and assistance email info@readtheplay.org.au

How to Host

- Read the Play sessions are currently held with all U16 football and 15/U netball clubs from AFL Barwon, Geelong & District Football Netball League and Colac & District Football Netball League.
- RTP is also working with Geelong United Basketball, Geelong Cricket Association and Geelong Galaxy.
- RTP plans to open the program to all sports in the Barwon region by 2025.
- Read the play sessions can be booked in advance and online via the website.
- A Read the Play session generally takes around 1 hour.
- The sessions are usually held in lieu of or immediately after a training session.

Preparation required

- The PWO (or club junior coordinator) has the role of setting up the room for the Read the Play session. Read the Play will liaise with them a week or so before the session to make sure that they are clear about the requirements for the session.
- The rooms are set up in up to 6 tables to allow for young people to play in teams.
- The maximum number of participants is 40 however the preferred number is around 25.
- It's important to communicate with parents/guardians about what happens in the session and provide them with information about what they should do if this session raises any concerns with them or their child. Club and parent resources are available at www.readtheplay.org.au





Mentally Healthy Sporting Club Guidelines

Other providers offering mental health support to community clubs in Victoria

How to book a Tackle Your Feelings session

Tackle Your Feelings is a free mental health training program for community football and netball coaches and players, as well as committee members, umpires and other club support staff.

Established in 2018 by the AFL Coaches Association, AFL Players' Association and Zurich Insurance, the program is based on the education delivered to the AFL industry, and is led by high profile player and coach ambassadors.



**TACKLE
YOUR
FEELINGS**

Tackle Your Feelings workshops are delivered by a local psychologist. The program aims to help participants gain tools to Understand, Recognise and Respond to signs of mental ill-health in their players.

Managed by Leisure Networks, this program is made available to a number of football netball clubs each year. To register your interest or find out more please refer to the Tackle your Feelings website: www.tackleyourfeelings.org.au

How to book an Ahead of the Game session

Ahead of the Game uses sport to teach young players, parents, coaches, umpires and volunteers how to talk about mental health. The program reviews how to recognise mental health challenges facing young players, what to do and when to get help. Players learn how to build resilience and overcome challenges in sport and life.

This program is designed to engage the whole local community football ecosystem. It includes interactive workshops and materials for community teams and their support network of parents, coaches and volunteers.

Ahead of the Game is delivered in the Barwon region by Meli in partnership with Read the Play. For further information go to www.readtheplay.org.au




Mentally Healthy Sporting Club Guidelines


Love Me, Love You	www.lovemelovey.ou.org.au	All community clubs, all ages, players, parents, coaches and volunteers. Awareness raising, education and referral pathways.
Outside the Locker Room	https://otlr.org.au	All community clubs, all ages, players, parents, coaches and volunteers. Awareness raising, education and referral pathways.
Sport and Life Training (SALT)	www.sportandlifetraining.com.au	Sports focused education programs with online support. Main focus is building healthy culture in sports clubs.

READ THE PLAY

FUNDRAISER BREAKFAST




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THURSDAY 18 JULY
PRESIDENT'S ROOM, GMHBA STADIUM
6.45AM - 9AM

PRESENTED BY



SUPPORTED BY



SAVE THE DATE

MENTAL HEALTH IS A TEAM SPORT



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Players

It's okay to say – I AM NOT OK

It is ok to not be ok. Share how you feel with someone you trust and feel comfortable with – this could be someone in your family, friend, coach, player wellbeing officer, teacher, doctor or other health professional.

Try and think about it as just another conversation. Describe what's happened, how you feel and the help you need. It's best to be direct so they can understand how you feel.

Ask your support person to help you find support, in person, online or over the phone.

It's important to have support, but if you tell someone about your suicidal thoughts, you can't expect them to keep it a secret. They'll need to be able to help you stay safe and that usually means calling in extra help.

Being a supportive team mate – Ask RUOK?

Asking someone if they are OK will NOT push a person to take a risk or cause them to harm themselves.

- The act of showing someone that you care can help,
- Encourage your team mate to discuss the issue openly with you,
- Text a message and start a conversation,
- Keep the communication going.



RUOK?
<https://www.ruok.org.au/how-to-ask>



Beyond Blue
<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>



• Youth (12-25) eheadspace 1800 650 890
• Geelong <https://headspace.org.au/>
• Corio
• Ocean Grove
• Colac





Mentally Healthy Sporting Club Guidelines

Parents & Guardians

General Information About Mental Health

Mental health affects the way people think, feel and act. Taking care of our mental health is just as important as having a healthy body. As a parent or guardian, you play an important role in your child's mental health. You're a vital cog in the support network.

You can promote good mental health by the things you say and do, and through the environment you create at home.

You can also learn about the early signs of mental health problems and know where to go for help.

So, how can you support your child's mental health?

- Help children build strong, caring relationships
- Help children and young people develop self-esteem, so that they feel good about themselves
- Listen, and respect their feelings
- Create a safe, positive home environment
- In difficult situations, help children and young people solve problems

DID YOU KNOW?

- **1 in 16 young** Australians is experiencing **depression** right now,
- **1 in 6 young** Australians is experiencing **anxiety** right now,
- **Over 75%** of mental health problems occur **before the age of 25**,
- Young people are **less likely** than any other age group to **seek professional help**.

Source: Statistics - Beyond Blue - beyondblue.org.au



Mentally Healthy Sporting Club Guidelines

Signs to Look For

MENTAL HEALTH SPECTRUM



GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

- Experiencing a full range of emotions, the good and bad.
- Coping with normal life stressors.
- Engaging meaningfully with your community.



POOR MENTAL HEALTH

- Increased stress in life
- Feeling overwhelmed, sad, frustrated.
- Maintaining relationships, joyful activities and responsibilities is more difficult.



MENTAL ILLNESS

- A diagnosable condition that impacts a person's thoughts behaviours and emotions
- May significantly impact a person's ability to maintain relationships, joyful activities and cope with stress

Common warning signs:

- Moodiness and irritability
- Loss of interest in life and previously enjoyable activities
- Withdrawing from friendships and family
- Changes in appetite
- Excessive or reduced sleep
- Lack of energy and motivation
- Difficulties with memory and concentration
- Mind racing
- Butterflies in your stomach
- Restless
- Panic attacks, increased heart rate, shortness of breath



Mentally Healthy Sporting Club Guidelines

How do I speak to a young person about mental health?

So you've seen some warning signs or symptoms and you need to take action. Here are some tips for having a conversation.

- **Choose a safe and comfortable environment to start the conversation.**
- **Ensure you have time to listen and avoid distractions or interruptions.**
- **Listen without judgement and do not be critical.**
- **Use open-ended questions.**
- **Reflect back what they say by paraphrasing or summarising what they are concerned about.**
- **Use the same language when describing the person's experience.**
- **Be aware of your body language and facial expressions.**
- **Practice actively listening and be non-confrontational.**
- **Referencing conversations or experiences you have had with other young people (whilst maintaining confidentiality) and the benefits those young people found from seeking help may help motivate a young person to take action. Anecdotal evidence that peers are also experiencing difficulties can both be validating and de-stigmatising.**
- **Use scale questions such as: 'On a scale from 0 to 10, 0 being the worst you could possibly feel and 10 being the best you could possibly feel, how are you feeling today?'**

TALKING TO YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH



EDUCATE YOURSELF

It is important to be aware of common mental health conditions for your children's age, signs, symptoms etc. Knowing support services your child or you can access may also be helpful.

START SMALL

This is an extremely important topic to address but don't feel as though you need to set aside hours to talk about it. Keep it simple, informal and don't put too much pressure on your child or the young person you are speaking to. Keep in mind that you may have to try a number of times before they are ready to talk to you about it.



ASK OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

Ask questions or make statements that need more than a 'yes' or 'no' answer. This will help your children to put things in their own words and keep the conversation flowing.

DEMONSTRATE EMPATHY

Be sure your child is aware you are there for them. They may feel awkward when they talk about these kinds of things, and may worry about expressing feelings like anger, sadness and embarrassment. Let them know that you understand that it may be difficult for them to talk, but you aren't going to judge them and are there for them.



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FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
WWW.READTHEPLAY.ORG.AU



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Need help? Contact a helpline.

Lifeline 13 11 14

24/7 online and phone crisis and suicide support and counselling for all Australians.

Beyond Blue 1300 224 636

24/7 advice and support for mental health concerns.

Suicide call back service 1300 659 467

24/7 phone or online professional counselling to people who are affected by suicide.

Kids help line 1800 551 800

24/7 phone and online counselling service for people aged 5-25.

e-headspace 1800 650 890

9am-1am free online and phone support for people aged 15-25.

Mensline Australia 1800 789 978

24/7 online and phone support for men who are seeking emotional support or experience relationship concerns.

Q life 1800 184 527

3pm – midnight, 7 days a week online or phone LGBTI peer support and referral for people in Australia wanting to talk about sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships.

SANE Australia 1800 187 263

Support service for people experiencing complex mental health issues.

The butterfly foundation helpline 1800 ED HOPE

8am – midnight, 7 days a week support for eating disorders and body image issues.



- Youth (12-25)
 - Geelong
 - Corio
 - Ocean Grove
 - Colac
- eheadspace 1800 650 890
<https://headspace.org.au/>



- CAMHS (0-15)
 - Jigsaw (16-25)
 - Adult (26-65)
 - Older adult (65 +)
- Triage (24/7): 1300 094 187
<https://barwonhealth.org.au/mhdas/index.php>



- Adult 26 +
 - North Geelong
 - Queenscliff
- 1800 573 151
GGQLocal@barwonhealth.org.au



- Anyone who identifies as a carer
 - Barwon- South West region
- (03) 5561 8111
<https://carerconnect.com.au/>



Parent Training and resources
<https://training.readtheplay.org.au/courses/parent-mental-health-training/>



RUOK?
<https://www.ruok.org.au/how-to-ask>



Beyond Blue
<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>



Youth MH First Aid training
<https://www.mhfa.com.au/our-courses/adults-supporting-young-people/youth-mental-health-first-aid/>



Applied Suicide Intervention Skills (ASIST) training
<https://livingworks.com.au/>



Meli- Parent programs and trainings
<https://www.meli.org.au/support-families-parents-carers/parent-and-family-group/>



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Mental Health Training

Course Name: Youth Mental Health First Aid

Overview

The Youth Mental Health First Aid course will teach you how to assist adolescents who may be experiencing a mental health problem or mental health crisis until appropriate professional help is received or the crisis resolves, using a practical, evidence-based Action Plan.

As part of the support of Player Wellbeing Officer, Read the Play offers one place per year to participating clubs in this training. Any additional attendees will be accommodated at a fee TBC.

Provider	Who is it for?	Duration and Mode	Cost
Read the Play/MHFA	Adults	1x7-hour face to face E-learning	FREE via RTP

Course Name: Read the Play Training (online)

Overview

Complete the Read the Play Youth mental health for training courses for parents, player wellbeing officers and club committee members.

Session will take you through the basics of:

- **Understanding how to maintain mental wellbeing,**
- **Learn about different mental illnesses – the signs and symptoms,**
- **When and how to offer support,**
- **Get the tools and knowledge to support young people.**

<https://training.readtheplay.org.au>



Mentally Healthy Sporting Club Guidelines

Course Name: Mental Health First Aid

Overview

The Standard Mental Health First Aid course teaches participants how to provide initial support to another adult who may be experiencing a mental health problem or mental health crisis, until professional help is received or the crisis resolves.

Course participants learn about the signs and symptoms of common mental health problems in adults, how to recognise and respond to an emerging or worsening mental health problem and the treatments and supports available.

Provider	Who is it for?	Duration and Mode	Cost
MHFA	Adults	14-hours 2x7-hour face to face 4 x3.5-hour face to face	Various

2023 Snapshot



Read the Play

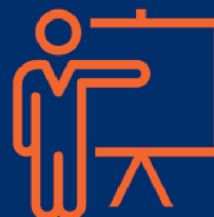


1,076

Young people participated in a RTP Program.

51

Program Workshops delivered – Huddle Up (7), MVP (41), Play On (3).



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Preparing young people to enter the workforce safely.



Entering the workforce for the first time can be intimidating and exciting all at the same time.

There's a lot to learn. As a parent or carer, you can help by talking to your family and friends about their rights to a safe workplace.

If your young workers are feeling **UMM**, that something's off or unsafe in the workplace, you can help them understand what to do next.

Find resources to support you and your young workers at worksafe.vic.gov.au/young-workers



Reducing workplace harm.

Q WorkSafe UMM



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Mental Health is a Team Sport



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readtheplay.org.au



www.theapcofoundation.com.au

***“You cannot do kindness too soon, for you
never know how soon it will be too late.”
– Ralph Waldo Emerson***

The APCO Foundation has the ability and the desire to make
a positive impact on peoples lives through kindness.

Thank you to all those who volunteer, support, give and
help the APCO Foundation continue to spread kindness
throughout our APCO communities.

