

Media Release

September 25, 2017

Free mental health coaching program for refugees, migrants in Brisbane

Refugees and migrants in Brisbane South can now access specialised mental health support through a new program delivered by trained professionals from culturally diverse backgrounds.

NewAccess is a free mental health coaching program developed by *beyondblue* and tailored for the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities of Logan, Redland, Scenic Rim and Brisbane City council areas.

It is an Australian first early intervention support program provided by Acacia Ridge Community Support Inc (ARCSI) with Federal Government funding via Brisbane South Primary Health Network (PHN).

The program has a special focus on people from multicultural communities over the age of 18 experiencing stress, isolation and early signs of anxiety and/or depression.

More than 140,000 residents in this region were born in non-English speaking countries and in the two years to July 2016, over 1800 refugees – mainly from African and Middle Eastern countries – settled here.

NewAccess coaches are trained in Low Intensity Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and have personal experience of the unique emotional challenges facing refugees and migrants – the trauma associated with fleeing a homeland, the heartache of leaving loved ones behind, loneliness and the challenge of building a new life.

NewAccess coach Jamileh Sabiri came to Australia as an 18-year-old refugee from Afghanistan: “Many people from my (refugee) background experienced depression and trauma and things like post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety,” Jamileh said.

“It was very common but not many people talked about it because the stigma attached is huge and many people suffer but don’t speak out. We need mental health services in CALD communities.”

***beyondblue* CEO Georgie Harman** said NewAccess was designed to help people overcome the most common barriers to seeking mental health support – cost, stigma and lack of accessible services.

Clients can attend six free sessions with their own mental health coach in person, by phone or via video apps such as FaceTime and Skype from any location.

Coaches will develop individually tailored recovery plans for each client and give them skills to manage their own mental health. Interpreters are available and GP referrals are not required.

“People from refugee and migrant backgrounds often face additional challenges, such as language barriers and isolation, when it comes to maintaining good mental health,” Ms Harman said. “NewAccess in Brisbane South provides quality mental health care that is culturally sensitive and easy to access.”

ARCSI Director Trish Cattermole said one of the key challenges her organisation faced in working with people from CALD backgrounds was the way culture determined what counts as mental illness and when and how people asked for help.

“By using the NewAccess model to deliver low intensity psychological services, we aim to reduce the stigma and barriers for CALD adults accessing mental health services in the early stages of depression and anxiety,” Ms Cattermole said.

Brisbane South PHN General Manager of Commissioned Programs Lucille Chalmers said the number of Brisbane South residents from CALD backgrounds was growing rapidly.

“This is why Brisbane South PHN has established services to connect people of refugee backgrounds, including newly arrived humanitarian entrants, with appropriate primary care providers,” Ms Chalmers said.

“We look forward to working with ARCSI in developing the program and achieving better health outcomes for our community.”

Ends.

AVAILABLE FOR MEDIA INTERVIEWS/PHOTOS

- NewAccess coaches
- CEOs from *beyondblue*, ARCSI and Brisbane South PHN

Please contact the *beyondblue* media team to organise interviews and for more information.

NewAccess launch event:

- 10:30am on Tuesday, October 3 at The Hut – 21 Hanify St, Acacia Ridge.
- **Media** is welcome to attend and speak directly with NewAccess coaches and CEOs.

Contact NewAccess Brisbane South

- By phone – ARCSI – (07) 3277 4231
- Email – newaccess@arcsi.org.au
- beyondblue.org.au/get-support/newaccess

NewAccess background notes:

- NewAccess is free and available to people from CALD backgrounds in Brisbane South, aged over 18.
- It is not a mental health crisis service.
- Coaches will “step up” clients who require more intensive support.
- No referrals needed from GPs or medical professionals.
- NewAccess operates in Brisbane North, Central and Eastern Sydney, South Western Sydney, South Australia, ACT, North Coast NSW, Murrumbidgee/Riverina region with more sites expected to launch this year.
- An Ernst and Young evaluation of the national pilot program (South Australia, ACT, and North Coast NSW) showed almost 70 per cent of participating clients recovered.
- The NewAccess program may be helpful for people experiencing isolation, loneliness, stress, unemployment and family problems among other stressful situations.

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