

Media Release

October 23, 2017

New mental health program launches in time for end of year exams

beyondblue is launching a free mental health coaching program in Sydney to support people experiencing the early signs of depression and anxiety.

The NewAccess program, available to people aged 16 and over, will be launched next week as school and university students head into one of the most stressful periods of the year – end of year exams.

NewAccess is available in person, by phone and via video Apps such as FaceTime and Skype and could be especially helpful for students as they prepare for exams.

Many young people thrive on study and the pursuit of the perfect academic score, but the pressure to perform can be unrelenting and can lead to anxiety and mental distress for others.

The latest research from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that one in four young people has a mental health condition. According to Mission Australia's 2016 Youth Survey Report, coping with stress, school and study problems topped the list of concerns among 15 to 19-year-olds.

Macquarie University Masters student Jessica Herkes, who began treatment for depression in her second year at university, said exam time caused enormous stress and anxiety for most students.

"There's a lot of pressure in the lead up to exams and then in the long wait for results afterward; you worry about failing because it can affect the next few years of your life," Jessica said.

"It would have been great to get support, especially coming into exams, because you can feel stressed and overwhelmed, and that can impact your ability to study."

NewAccess is available to people living in Sydney's central and eastern suburbs and is delivered by Bolton Clarke (formerly RDNS) and funded by the Central and Eastern Sydney PHN (Primary Health Network).

Each NewAccess client is paired with a trained mental health coach, who will provide low intensity therapy over six private sessions.

NewAccess coaches will not only guide clients back to good health, but will enable them to identify mental health risks and give them the skills to manage symptoms in the future.

NewAccess aims to make seeking support as easy as possible for people – GP referrals are not required and there are no waiting lists.

***beyondblue* CEO Georgie Harman** said NewAccess could provide invaluable support and resilience-building tools for students preparing for end of year exams and the transition to university or a career.

"We all struggle at some point in our lives whether it's exam time pressures, relationship breakdowns or everyday issues with work and family but support is available," Ms Harman said.

"NewAccess supports people early so they don't run into mental health crises down the track and it arms them with the tools they need to manage their mental health in difficult times ahead."

Bolton Clarke Executive General Manager Dan Woods said the organisation was proud to deliver the program, which goes to the heart of its mission as a provider of services that foster health and independence.

"The common element across our services base is our objective to improve and maintain health, wellbeing and quality of life for individuals and communities, in whatever way is most appropriate at certain points in their life," he said.

“Our New Access coaches are looking forward to working with people across the Central Eastern Sydney PHN to give them the tools they need to cope with anxiety and other mental health challenges. For students, this may mean accessing support for key milestones and transitions such as final exams, leaving school, and starting university.”

Central and Eastern Sydney PHN CEO Dr Michael Moore said: “NewAccess is a service for people experiencing mild to moderate depression or anxiety. It’s easy to access, you don’t need a referral. You just call to arrange a confidential appointment, or a telephone conversation at a time of your choosing.

“It makes it really easy for people to get the help that they need.”

NewAccess operates at eight sites nationally, and is already available for people in Sydney’s south west.

An independent evaluation of the program showed almost 70 per cent of those who completed the program recovered.

To make an appointment with NewAccess, phone 1800 010 630.

Media is welcome to attend the official NewAccess launch starting 10.30am on Monday, October 30 at Woodstock Community Centre – 22 Church St, Burwood.

Ends.

AVAILABLE FOR MEDIA INTERVIEWS

- Macquarie University student Jessica Herkes
- NewAccess coaches
- Spokespeople from *beyondblue*, Bolton Clarke and Central and Eastern Sydney PHN

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

NewAccess background notes:

- It is not a mental health crisis service.
- Coaches will “step up” clients who require more intensive support.
- NewAccess operates in Central and Eastern Sydney, South Western Sydney, Brisbane North, Brisbane South, South Australia, ACT, North Coast New South Wales, Murrumbidgee/Riverina region with more sites expected to launch this year.
- The NewAccess program may be helpful for people experiencing isolation, loneliness, stress, unemployment and family problems among other stressful situations.

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