

VICTORIAN STUDENT-FOCUSED MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNICATIONS ADVISORY GROUP

Apply for the group to help ensure there is relevant and meaningful communication around student mental health!

BACKGROUND

What is the advisory group?

The Victorian Student-Focused Mental Health Communications Advisory Group has been established by the Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC), to support the Victorian Department of Education. The advisory group is designed to give students an opportunity to provide feedback on existing communications materials related to in-school mental health support for students.

The advisory group will have a special focus on improving communication between the Department of Education and students about key mental health programs, including but not limited to:

- [Schools Mental Health Fund and Menu](#),
- [Mental Health in Primary Schools program](#), and
- [Mental Health Practitioners initiative](#).

In collaboration with the Department of Education, the advisory group will provide detailed feedback and advice to improve existing communications materials and future campaigns to ensure the department are reaching students. This could include looking at the use of student-friendly language, deciding who we are talking to and why, and what we want to say.


The advisory group will be made up of 8 secondary school students from across Victoria who share a diverse range of experiences at school.

OVERVIEW

What would the advisory group discuss?

Students on the advisory group will have discussions and attend workshops with VicSRC and the Department of Education. The workshops will be lead by an experienced facilitator and will focus on how the department can improve the way they communicate with students across an array of different platforms about mental health and the in-school support available to students.

Some of the key things that you may discuss:



- Your current understanding of the government's new in-school mental health support (such as the Mental Health Menu) and how you found out about it.
- How and what you engage with on social media, in the news, in articles, etc.
- How you find your information on various topics, not just to do with school.
- How information about mental health can be made more accessible, inclusive and safe for you to access.
- Your general student experience when it comes to mental health and in-school mental health supports, your understanding of it and the understanding of your peers.

What would my responsibilities be?

Time commitments

Students should expect to spend up to 30 hours participating in activities related to the advisory group throughout the course of this year.

Each meeting of the advisory group will run for a few hours, some online and some in-person.

Each meeting of the advisory group will take place during the school holiday period between each term, with the exception of the final meeting which will take place after school in the couple of weeks leading up to the summer break (see the meeting schedule below for more information).

For each meeting of the advisory group, there will also be a 'pre-briefing' meeting, which will only be attended by group members and VicSRC staff. These meetings will run for approximately one to two hours.

These meetings will be an opportunity for advisory group members to learn more about what will be discussed during the upcoming meeting and ask questions to ensure they feel comfortable and prepared.

Training and upskilling will also be provided to advisory group members as part of the 'pre-briefing' meetings to help build confidence and expertise around the topics being discussed in the meetings.

Attending meetings

Two meetings (the first and third) will happen in-person in Melbourne at a venue that is still to be determined. The other two meetings (second and fourth) will be hosted online. For in-person meetings, VicSRC will be able to support regional students by covering the cost of travelling to Melbourne to attend the meetings if needed.

Each of the 'pre-briefing' meetings will happen online via Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

Being able to attend all of these meetings is the most important thing to consider if you're thinking about applying for the advisory group. You should check with your parents, carers, or guardians to make sure they can support you in attending the meetings if needed.

Professional expectations

Participating on the advisory group is a great opportunity for students to build knowledge and confidence in a professional setting. VicSRC doesn't expect students to have any prior work experience, or have experience in communications, but students who participate in the advisory group should come ready to learn more about working in a professional environment and to dedicate the time needed to contribute to the advisory group in a meaningful and ongoing way.

Expertise

Don't worry – advisory group members are not expected to be communications experts, or to have a deep understanding of the education system or government.

Instead, the advisory group is all about gathering students who are eager to share their own experiences, reflections, and recommendations with VicSRC and the Department of Education in order to improve communications about in-school mental health supports.

How much will I be reimbursed?

Students who participate in the advisory group will be reimbursed for their time and expertise. The reimbursement is called an honorarium, which is a payment made in recognition of voluntary services provided by the advisory group.

Student advisory group members will be reimbursed \$25 for each hour they spend participating in the advisory group or related engagements, like training and pre-briefings. Additional reimbursement will be provided to cover travel costs for those students who need it.

Meeting schedule

Engagement	Potential date range*
Initial meeting – meet and greet	12 February – 16 February 2024 (<i>online</i>)
Term 1 Meeting pre-brief Training and upskilling (session one)	18 March – 21 March 2024 (<i>online</i>)
Term 1 Meeting	8 April – 12 April 2024 (<i>in-person in Melbourne</i>)
Term 2 Meeting pre-brief Training and upskilling (session two)	1 July – 5 July 2024 (<i>online</i>)
Term 2 Meeting	8 July – 12 July 2024 (<i>online</i>)
Term 3 Meeting pre-brief Training and upskilling (session three)	23 September – 7 September 2024 (<i>online</i>)
Term 3 Meeting	30 September – 4 October 2024 (<i>in-person in Melbourne</i>)
Term 4 Meeting pre-brief Training and upskilling (session four)	9 December – 13 December 2024 (<i>online</i>)
Term 4 Meeting	16 December – 20 December 2024 (<i>online</i>)
* <i>Timing is subject to change.</i>	

ELIGIBILITY

VicSRC is looking for eight (8) Victorian secondary students from a range of different areas, backgrounds and experiences. We are looking to engage with:

- A student at a government school, from Melbourne.
- A student at a government school, from regional Victoria.
- A student at a specialist school, from anywhere in Victoria.
- A student at an independent school, from anywhere in Victoria.
- A student with lived experience of seeking mental health support in school.
- A student with lived experience of mental ill-health.
- A student with lived experience caring for someone with mental ill-health (e.g. a family member).

If you meet one (or more) of the criteria above, and you are confident that you will have the time and availability to participate in all of the meetings of the advisory group, then you are eligible to apply!

HOW TO APPLY

Once you double-check to make sure that you're eligible, you can go ahead and apply by filling [this online form](https://forms.office.com/r/RzmvJxdEQ8) (or head to <https://forms.office.com/r/RzmvJxdEQ8>). Please note that applications will close on **Wednesday, February 28, 2024**.

What happens after I apply?

Once you apply, you'll be contacted by VicSRC to set up a brief and informal online meeting to learn more about you and your experiences at school.

After that, VicSRC will consider all applications, and we will inform all applicants whether their application was successful by Monday, March 4, 2024.

What if I have more questions?

If you have any questions, or if you'd like to talk more about this opportunity, please reach out to VicSRC on the contact details below.

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