

# MindMatters Plus TIP SHEET NO.3

## CHOOSING SCHOOL-BASED TARGETED INTERVENTIONS FOR SOME STUDENTS NEEDING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT IN SCHOOL



Indicated programs select students who are displaying mild signs of a problem, or who are at high risk of developing a disorder due to known risk factors, but do not necessarily fulfil the diagnostic criteria for a disorder. Indicated programs involve a screening or selection procedure prior to the intervention.

Read more about indicated programs in Information sheet numbers 5,6,7,8

**Use:** Building Whole School Approach

**Audience:** Executive Team and Support Teachers

**Intent:** Early Intervention strategies

### Advantages

- Intervention is targeted at students and adolescents showing mild to moderate symptoms of emotional distress.
- Efficient if screening is completed accurately – Students selected are those known to have the greatest need for the program and able to gain most from the intervention.
- Smaller numbers in groups allow more intensive and individualised approach, focussing school counsellor time on students who will most benefit.

### Before deciding on a universal program, consider the following:

- Screening students increases the likelihood of identifying students with serious emotional problems who may require special help with their problems. Identify the referral networks and backup services available to help these children.
- Students identified by screening should be offered the program after a brief interview to assess the relevance.
- As screening for emotional problems is reliant on self report, students may be included in the program who do not actually show signs of a disorder or exclude some who may not have emotional disorders.

### Settings best suited to Universal programs

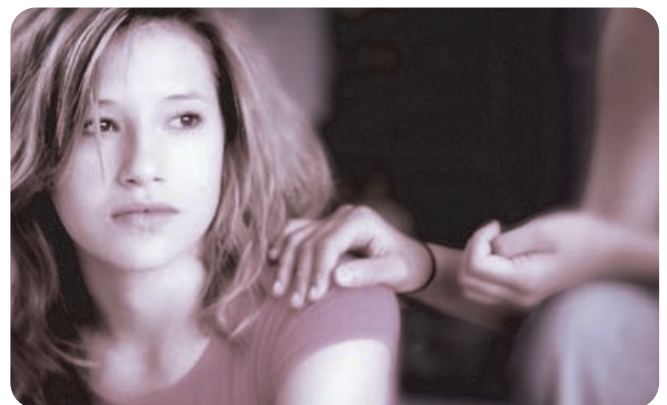
- As only the more at-risk students selected, indicated programs recruit less participants and are often more practical in settings with large numbers of students (eg. a large urban school) or as a complementary program to a universal approach.

### Disadvantages

- As screening involves the identification of emotional problems, it is necessary to use clinical questionnaires. Normal procedures for informing of parents will apply.
- As with instruments to identify risk factors, assessment procedures may not be applicable in all settings or with all cultural groups.
- Runs the risk of possible stigmatisation through labelling - therefore requires ethical issues to be thought through and dealt with sensitively. The positive aspects of programs should be identified and promoted, such as teaching coping strategies and problem solving, rather than the treatment of depression or anxiety.

### Staffing

- School Counsellors can successfully implement the program with teachers who have received adequate training.
- Collaborative group leadership with local adolescent services has benefits for liaison between services.



## Relevant learning from MindMatters Plus initiative:

“Training in some prevention and intervention programs has provided teachers with a useful conceptual framework (e.g. Cognitive Behavioural Theory) which they have then been able to apply more widely to all students.”

“The opportunity to trial different programs and resources acted as a catalyst to analyse what we could be done to lift whole school capacity and improve support for all students.”

**Dr. Ann Wignall:** Director, Lower North Shore Child and Adolescent Mental Health, North Sydney and Central Coast Area Health Service