

NATIONAL ONLINE MENTORING PROGRAM

INFORMATION FOR AUSTRALIA-BASED PARTICIPANTS

We are very excited to share information about our Autistic-led online mentoring groups. We run 5 cycles per year from February through to December.

We offer online group mentoring programs for 8 – 22-year-old Autistic people. Our programs have proven to build confidence and social connection in a safe environment. Autistic young people are able to be themselves and are met with acceptance, not judgement. The online group mentoring program meets young people where they are at and endeavours to provide a safe space where a young person can be themselves.

All of our groups are offered on a mixed gender basis.

Each online mentoring group includes up to 8-9 “mentees” led by two experienced I CAN mentors in a safe, engaging, supportive environment. The current support ratio is 1:4 (one staff member to 4 mentees).

Our program is designed to ensure that even if you miss one session, it will not have an impact on subsequent sessions. Each cycle contains a one-hour session at the same time each week (6 weekly sessions in total).

You will find the most recent full list of groups available on the Expression Of Interest Form.

Age groups are advertised broadly, we will group participants as close to their age bracket as possible. As a guide we generally group within the following: 8- 12 years, 13-17 years & 17-22 years - this may vary in special interest groups.

I CAN Groups- 8-22 years old

I CAN Groups are designed for Autistic children, teens & young adults and cover numerous topics including but not limited to: self esteem, change, transitions, Autistic identity, self-care, relaxation, stress, strengths and many more topics that change on a rotating basis. These groups offer a safe space for participants to connect with peers who they can relate to due to shared experiences.

I CAN IMAGINATION CLUB-8-12 years old

I CAN Imagination Club® offers a safe, engaging environment where Mentees are encouraged to recognise and celebrate their own strengths. Participants do not need a diagnosis of any sort in order to join and benefit from the I CAN Imagination Club®. They are invited to take part because of their 'big imaginations' and we do not explicitly discuss Autism. All topics will be covered in an age-appropriate way and may include but are not limited to: belonging, self-esteem, self-care, social groups, interests, sensory needs, change and transitions. This is most suited to those in their primary school years.

I CAN Special Interest Groups (Topics Vary)- 8-22 years old

I CAN Special Interest Groups are designed for Autistic children, teens & young adults to connect to peers and mentors with the same special interest and share these passions and shared experiences with others in a safe and fun environment. The content will be based on the special interest chosen and the content changes on a rotating basis to cater for ongoing participation across the year.

LGBTIQA+ 13-22 years old

I CAN LGBTIQA+ is designed for Autistic teens and young adults who identify as LGBTIQA+ (including those who are questioning). This group offers a safe space for participants to connect with peers and mentors who can relate and explore topics including, but not limited to: Autistic & Queer identity, Queer culture, belonging, social connections, self-care, emotion regulation and sensory needs.

MENTORS

All of our mentors have experience as school-based and online mentors and are particularly passionate about working with Autistic young people and young adults. The majority of our online mentoring team are Autistic, we ensure that at least one Autistic mentor is assigned to each group. *Please note: our mentors are not trained counsellors and not intended to replace mental health or medical professionals.*

All of our online mentoring sessions are recorded with the purpose of ensuring that we are able to access information in a quick manner for health and wellbeing purposes if the occasion arises.

We have found that the online mentoring delivery model can be a very effective way to bring the **positive messages and powerful mentorship model of the I CAN Network** to participants who are navigating school life and post-school paths.

Our engaging group mentoring sessions, which take place for one hour each week via live video conference, allow participants to connect with others who will understand and accept them while developing strategies for managing changes, challenges and opportunities that can arise as an Autistic young person/young adult.

To be considered for any of the small group programs above, the conditions below need to be met and accepted:

- Are aware that an Expression of Interest form has been submitted and are willing to participate.
- Currently in one of the age cohorts specified.
- Understands that this is group mentoring, not individual or 1:1 mentoring.
- Located in Australia or New Zealand.
- Aware that they are Autistic, *unless participating in the Imagination Club group.*
- Comfortable engaging online and understanding that this may provide some sensory challenges for individuals who are sound sensitive as the online environment may prove to be noisy in some sessions.
- Willing to take part in a group activity (this can be difficult for some individuals who need significant “down time” in the late afternoon or evening, so please consider preferences and needs)
- Can attend the allocated day and time.
- Understand that a cancellation policy is in place and is willing to accept its terms upon acceptance of a spot.
- Will need to be able to abide by our ICT terms and conditions that ensure online safety and positive cyber participation.
- Understands that the session will be recorded and the recording will only be accessed for health, wellbeing and safety circumstances.

KEY PROGRAM DETAILS

TIMING

Weekly group mentoring sessions will run for 6 weekly sessions. If your cycle date includes school holidays, please note that sessions will run through this time, however we will not run on the week coinciding with a public (Australian) holiday (you will be advised). We run new cycles roughly every eight weeks and currently have 5 Intakes per year.

Each online session will run for one hour at a consistent time each week, for the duration of 2021. Most, but not all of our sessions run between 6:40-7:40 PM AEST/AEDT. We also have some afternoon groups that run from 4:30-5:30pm AEST/AEDT. As our program expands, we anticipate adding more groups that are held at different times in order to better accommodate participants across various time zones. Please ensure that you check your local time against the program time zone.

COST

\$285 for a 6-session program

\$165 for a NDIS progress report at completion of program (optional)

NDIS

We have had many families who are self-managing under NDIS or plan managed who use their funds to cover the cost of online mentoring. Please note we do not provide specific line numbers and most families will use funds from Core Funding due to its flexibility. We will invoice for the full six weeks.

If you are NDIS/NDIA Managed we cannot submit our invoice to them for processing as we have chosen not to be NDIS registered due to the small size of our organisation. You can request to the NDIS/NDIA that the program fee to be released as self managed to participate in the program.

However, if this is not possible you will need to privately fund the program as per many of our families.

Please note that if you are Plan Managed, we strongly recommend that you seek prior approval from your Plan Manager to ensure that they will cover the payment when the invoice arrives. If your Plan Manager refuses responsibility for the payment, you will be liable to cover the costs privately. This also extends to expired plans that you are unable to recover the funds from.

If you have elected to receive an NDIS report at the end of the program, it will be invoiced separately to the program invoice. Invoices will be sent to plan managers directly when their email addresses have been provided when registering. NDIS reports will only be emailed once payment has been received for both the sessions and for the report. Please note that your report may take a few weeks post program due to the sheer number we write up. Our staff will take notes on individuals who require a report during each session.

NDIS REPORTS

NDIS Reports are written at the end of the 6 week program, you will receive these reports in 4-6 weeks following the end of a program (if you have a planning meeting sooner, you need to email online@icannetwork.com.au to let them know to fast track the report). These reports are for the purpose of evidence to the NDIS of your young persons participation, including notes on how the online mentoring has helped build the participants capacity to meet ndis goals and any recommendations for further participation. It is beneficial if you are wanting to secure more funding for your young person to continue in our Online Mentoring Program for more cycles.

PLATFORM/TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

All online sessions are held in a private video conferencing room using ZOOM (www.zoom.us). Zoom is compatible with various operating systems and is accessible via computer, tablet or mobile devices (as a free download). <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697-Getting-Started>. Additionally, we acknowledge that many of our participants experience anxiety prior or during sessions and we are very understanding and flexible, we allow video and/or audio off, and Zoom has a chat function that allows communication with the group via typing. There is no fee to use Zoom as we are running meetings. It is a free download.

We recommend testing the Zoom link ahead of schedule to ensure that it works on the preferred device. Please contact us if you need assistance with the Zoom platform.

We do utilise the waiting room option for all sessions, if your young person joins early, they will not be let into the session until the start time. We strongly encourage that all participants use their first name only when signing into Zoom, this ensures individual privacy and also ensures that we can identify those in the wait room. Please note that we also may ask the participant to turn their camera on momentarily to identify who is in the session.

All online sessions will be recorded and stored for a specific period of time, access to the recordings is restricted to those responsible for carrying out duties relating to our Child Protection policy and will be accessed when deemed necessary in relation to participants' health, wellbeing and safety.

STRUCTURE OF THE SESSIONS

Above all, the sessions are designed to be a respectful, safe place for young people/young adults to connect and be accepted and celebrated for who they are. The mentors invest a lot of time each week in coming up with angles and content that will resonate with the specific “mentees” in their group. Although the sessions are very fluid, they do tend to follow a certain general order each week.

As with all I CAN programs and our team meetings, sessions open with “Good News Sharing,” followed by some sort of engaging “ice breaking activity” designed to draw mentees in and highlight their interests. The thrust of the sessions center around a particular theme, presented in a way that invites engagement, including: building friendships; managing change and challenges; getting organised and navigating classes; managing stress/pacing yourself; building confidence/believing in yourself. Our mentors will also ensure that there is sufficient time to address questions and themes that the mentees raise.

Interest-based groups such as “Screens, Tunes & Characters” allow mentors and mentees to come together in a safe space to discuss shared passion around things like gaming, movies, music and various characters. This is the same with other special interest groups.

To learn more about session content, please see this February 2020 I CAN video overview, “Accessing I CAN Programs.” Online mentoring is covered at the 16:58 mark:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=m31Ktl5nbGc&t=1588s.

OFFERS & CONFIRMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

Submitting an Expression of Interest (EOI) form is the gateway for being considered for an online group. EOI link; <https://www.tfaforms.com/4842640>

You will be contacted and sent an offer as soon as a space is available in the group you have listed as your preference. Please note that we process EOI based on a time stamp system.

REPEAT PARTICIPANTS

As we launch each new online group mentoring cycle (roughly every 8-10 weeks), you will need to re-submit the Expression of Interest form to be considered for another online group. If you would like your young person to participate in more than one group, you will need to fill out a form for each group.

ACCEPTING OR DECLINING AN OFFER

You will receive an email from online@icannetwork.com.au informing you that a spot has been made available. The email will outline how many days you have to respond to the offer before the offer is passed on to another individual. It is important to check your spam folder as unfortunately at times our emails will end up there.

You need to accept or decline the invitation. The process is outlined in the offer email. Please ensure that the participant has been asked before committing to a spot.

If you wish to accept, please fill in the online service agreement and familiarise yourself with the cancellation policy. You will receive a second email with the final logistical information including Zoom links, session prompts and staff allocations closer to the start date.

Please note this information usually comes within one week prior to the sessions as we have many families to bring onboard and formalise groups and staffing.

An invoice will be sent to your nominated email address and a text message reminder to the number you provided.



If you would like to decline and participate at a later date, please decline the invitation and fill out an EOI when the time is right for your family.

WAITING LIST

Those who meet the participation criteria but do not receive an offer in the upcoming cycle will automatically be placed on a waiting list in the order that your Expression of Interest was received. We will contact you when the first space becomes available in a new program cycle.

CANCELLATION. POLICY & WITHDRAWING

Please note that we have a strict cancellation policy in place for our program. We understand that certain circumstances may arise which means withdrawing from the program, however we are proud employers of Autistic individuals and we are unable to replace a participant spot with very short notice or once a program has commenced. You will receive a copy of our cancellation policy with your offer of a spot in the program, make sure you read and accept the terms before accepting your spot. Please note that a cancellation fee will still be applied during times of state or national lockdowns associated with COVID due to the online nature of the program.

Parents are responsible for monitoring their child's attendance, due to the large number of groups running at one time. Please email us if your child will be absent or if there are any other problems or concerns.

SHARING OF INFORMATION AND PERSONAL DETAILS

We currently have a strict policy that we cannot facilitate the exchange of personal information between participants or their families. Due to Child Safety, Privacy and Child Protection, we cannot facilitate in any way this exchange of details.

FOR FURTHER QUESTIONS

If you have further questions not covered in this document, please reach out to our online team:
online@icannetwork.com.au.