

# Cool Kids & Chilled Autism

## PROGRAM INFORMATION 2025

The Cool Kids Program is a world renowned cognitive behavioural therapy program developed at Macquarie University to teach children and parents skills that address anxiety disorders. The original program has been adapted to suit the learning style and needs that arise for children who are also on the Autism Spectrum

### ABOUT COOL KIDS & CHILLED AUTISM

The Cool Kids Autism Spectrum Adaptation is a 10 session program aimed at helping autistic children and teens to manage anxiety.

The program is offered at Macquarie University in both individual and group formats. There are two versions:

- Cool Kids Autism for children
  - Grades 1 and 2 can do individual sessions
  - Grade 3 to 6 can do individual or group
- Chilled Autism for pre-teens and teens
  - Grade 6 to 8 can do individual or group
  - Grade 9 to 12 can do individual sessions.

Both programs are designed to help young autistic people for whom a main current challenge relates to anxiety that impacts on their day-to-day life.

Cool Kids and Chilled use a cognitive behavioural approach with a focus on teaching skills to manage anxiety in everyday situations, including:

- Recognising anxiety
- Relaxation
- Parenting strategies that encourage brave behaviour
- Identifying and using helpful (realistic) thoughts, and most importantly,
- Facing fears, building independence, and increasing confidence through stepladders (gradual exposure).



During each session, families receive information on the topic being covered and are offered the chance to engage in discussion, games and role play to learn new skills and then to use their skills in real life situations. Practice tasks are a crucial part of the program and are given following every session.

*It is worth noting that the program focuses on the management of anxiety only. It is not a social skills program and does not focus on emotion regulation for other types of emotions or behavioural challenges.*

### WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

The Cool Kids & Chilled Autism programs are designed for children and teens who have a formal diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. The concepts and written work in the program require a grade 3 level of literacy.

For the group program, children and teens will usually be enrolled in a mainstream classroom setting (with or without an aide) and can cope with small group work.



Children who are suicidal, who are self-harming or who have been school refusing for two weeks or more, will not be recommended to the program due to the complexity of these situations. These exclusions are in place to ensure that the program is delivered to children who are most likely to benefit from the program.

We offer individual therapy that may be suitable for your child if they are not suitable for the Cool Kids and Chilled Autism.

### INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS

If you would prefer to complete the program during individual sessions or your child is in grades 1-2 or 9-12, you can contact the clinic directly on 02 9850 8711 to complete an intake and be guided as to our current waitlist.

Individual sessions begin with 1-2 assessment sessions, and then a treatment plan is discussed that will best suit your child and the goals that you express during the assessment.

While the Cool Kids and Chilled program are typically 10 sessions, there is flexibility to complete additional sessions to incorporate other skills or work on non-anxiety goals if these are relevant to your child.

## GROUP PROGRAM

A thorough assessment will be conducted to determine if the Cool Kids or Chilled Autism group program is likely to be helpful for your child.

### ASSESSMENT

The assessment is split into two stages.

- An extensive online interview and series of questionnaires that are completed by the primary caregiver and a short online questionnaire for the young person.
- An in-person interview with the young person (and their primary caregiver). The in-person interview takes approximately 1 hour.

By splitting the assessment into 2 stages, we are able to ensure that a Cool Kids or Chilled group is likely to be appropriate prior to a young person having to attend the clinic. This allows us to refer on early or offer an individual approach if it is unlikely that the group will be appropriate.

After the assessment, a recommendation will be discussed with families that will include the Cool Kids or Chilled Autism group program if that is appropriate for your child.

The psychologist may recommend completing the program in individual therapy if that is more likely to meet your child's needs. The recommendation for group or individual will be based on a number of factors including family preferences, suitability of a child for the group setting, current wait list and group dynamic.

### GROUP SESSIONS

Cool Kids and Chilled groups both involve 10 sessions that are held over 12-14 weeks.

- All groups start at 4.30pm on the same day each week and run for 2 hours.
- Sessions are attended by 4-6 families, with parents/caregivers and children/teens involved in every session.
- Sessions do not occur in school holidays or on public holidays.
- The final 2-3 sessions will occur bi-weekly to allow time for families to practice skills

Sessions are facilitated by a psychologist or clinical psychologist who has had specialised training in the autism spectrum adaptation of the Cool Kids Program. A provisional psychologist will attend as a co-therapist and 1-2 assistants will be present to assist with the children when the psychologists are working with parents.



## COSTS AND REBATES

### REBATES

If you obtain a *Mental Health Treatment Plan and referral* from your child's GP, psychiatrist or paediatrician you may be able to claim a Medicare Rebate on up to 10 individual and 10 group sessions in a calendar year.

Access to the Medicare rebate will be dependent on how many services you have used previously on that plan/ within the calendar year. Rebates are only applicable if the session is attended.

Alternatively individual or group sessions may be funded via the NDIS if identified in your child's NDIS plan.

### GROUP PROGRAM

	Up Front Cost*
Initial Online Assessment	\$137.50
In-person Assessment	\$275
10 Session Group	\$2600 paid up-front

### INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS

Treatment costs and rebates vary depending on the qualifications of the psychologist conducting the sessions.

	Up Front Cost*	Medicare Rebate
Registered Psychologist	\$230 per 50 mins	\$96.65
Clinical Psychologist	\$275 per 50 mins	\$141.85

\* Prices are subject to change

## RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

The Emotional Health Clinic prides itself on being a world-leader in research on the causes, assessment and treatment of anxiety. You may be invited to participate in activities that are part of a research study. Participation in these activities is voluntary and if you choose not to participate in a particular study this will have no impact on your participation in the Cool Kids or Chilled Autism Program.

### WHAT SHOULD I DO NEXT?

If you would like your child to take part in the group program please complete the registration form available on our [website](#).

If you would like to enquire about individual sessions or if you have any further questions, please contact the Emotional Health Clinic on **(02) 9850 8711**.

#### FIND OUT MORE

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