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 challenges that arise for children who also have an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

**ABOUT THE PROGRAM**

The program focuses on teaching children and parents skills to manage anxiety in everyday situations. These skills include:

- Understanding 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).

Social skills are also touched on in the program as they are often a crucial part of building a child’s confidence, however parents should note that social skills are not the primary focus of the program and consequently the program will not replace programs or treatments that focus on social skill development.

The program is offered in both a group format (for children in grades 2 through 6) and on an individual basis (for children and adolescents of any age).

**CAN MY CHILD PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROGRAM?**

The Cool Kids ASD program is designed for children who:

- have a formal diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder with an indication that they are considered ‘high-functioning’. That is the ASD is described as mild, high functioning, Asperger’s, PDD-NOS or level 1 ‘requiring support’.
- are currently enrolled in a mainstream classroom setting (with or without an aide).

Our program will **not be suitable** if your child:

- is unable to communicate verbally
- displays significant oppositional, hyperactive or aggressive behaviours
- has significant learning delays (concepts and written work in the program require a grade 1-2 level of literacy)
- is at risk due to school refusal, abuse, out of home placement, suicidal thoughts or self-harming behaviours

These exclusions are in place to ensure that our program is likely to provide benefit to each child. Each child will be carefully assessed to work out whether our program is appropriate or whether other programs or services may be a better fit.

**WHAT DOES THE PROGRAM INVOLVE?**

**INITIAL INDIVIDUAL SESSION**

To determine the type of program best suited to your child we will invite you to attend an initial individual session. Both your child and you will attend this appointment and we will ask you both to complete questionnaires about your child’s thoughts, feelings and behaviours. The session will include a detailed interview with parents (approximately 1 hour) and a brief one-on-one interview with each child (up to 30 minutes).

This session focuses on anxiety and depression only. Information on other difficulties may be gathered however we do not provide comprehensive assessment of other issues such as type of ASD, ADHD or learning problems. A verbal recommendation will be provided to you following the session.

**TREATMENT**

The Cool Kids ASD program is conducted during **10-12 sessions over approximately 3-4 months**. The program can be completed individually (50 minute sessions), in a group setting (2 hour sessions) or by participating in the group and supplementing this with individual sessions to allow one-on-one work for difficult issues if needed.

The recommendation for group or individual will be based on a number of factors including family preference, suitability of a child for the group setting, current waitlist and if a child will ‘fit well’ with the next available group (for example we may recommend that a Year 6 girl complete individual sessions if the next group already contains predominantly Year 2 and 3 boys).
Sessions are attended by the assessed child and at least one parent (though there is a distinct advantage if both parents are able to attend). Sessions are facilitated by a psychologist or clinical psychologist who has had specialised training in the ASD adaptation of the Cool Kids Program. In group programs a provisional (intern) 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.

**HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?**
If you obtain a Mental Health Treatment Plan 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.

**INITIAL INDIVIDUAL SESSION**
The cost for the initial individual session to determine the best format for ongoing treatment for your child varies depending on the qualifications of the psychologist conducting the session. The table below sets out the costs for 90 minute session (including potential Medicare rebate).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Session Cost</th>
<th>Up Front Cost</th>
<th>Medicare Rebate**</th>
<th>Out of Pocket</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial Session – Psychologist</td>
<td>$270 for 90 minute</td>
<td>$84.80</td>
<td>$185.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>session</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Session – Clinical Psychologist</td>
<td>$330 for 90 minute</td>
<td>$124.50</td>
<td>$205.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>session</td>
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</table>

**TREATMENT**
Treatment costs vary depending on whether you participate in individual or group sessions, or a combination of the two. Treatment costs and rebates also vary depending on the qualifications of the psychologist conducting the sessions. The table below sets out the costs for individual sessions and group programs (including potential Medicare rebate).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment Costs</th>
<th>Up Front Cost</th>
<th>Medicare Rebate**</th>
<th>Out of Pocket</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Session – Psychologist</td>
<td>$180 per 50 minute</td>
<td>$84.80 per session</td>
<td>$95.20 per session</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>session</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Session – Clinical Psychologist</td>
<td>$220 per 50 minute</td>
<td>$124.50 per session</td>
<td>$95.50 per session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>session</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Session Group Program – Psychologist</td>
<td>$1300 paid up front</td>
<td>$21.65 per session</td>
<td>$1083.50 per program end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for 10 sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Session Group Program – Clinical Psychologist</td>
<td>$1400 paid up front</td>
<td>$31.65 per session</td>
<td>$1083.50 per program end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for 10 sessions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Access to the Medicare rebate will be dependent on obtaining the Mental Health Treatment Plan and on how many services you have used previously on that plan/within the calendar year.

**As an example of total costs:** The following assumes your child has a valid Mental Health Treatment Plan covering 6 individual sessions and 10 group sessions (that you have not used elsewhere). The initial session with one of our clinical psychologists will cost $330 and you would receive a rebate of $124.50. If the recommendation is for the group program and the next program is being facilitated by a psychologist, you will pay $1300 up front for the program and at the end of the program you will be able to claim a rebate of $216.50 from Medicare. If during the program you attend a one-on-one session with the psychologist to work more intensively on a specific issue, this additional session will cost $180 (paid at the time of the session) and would be eligible for a rebate of $84.80.

**WHAT SHOULD I DO NEXT?**
If you would like to take part in the program or if you have any further questions, please contact the Centre for Emotional Health Clinic on (02) 9850 8711.