

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Project Title: *Understanding school attendance challenges among young people in out-of-home care (OOHC): Young people's perspectives*

MUHREC Project ID: 49961

What this study is about

This study wants to understand why some young people in OOHC find going to school hard, and what might make school feel safer, easier, or more supportive. Your voice matters, and your experiences can help make things better for others. Young people in OOHC often have experiences that adults don't fully understand, and this study wants to make sure your perspective is heard.

Who is running the study

- Amanda O'Neil (student investigator)
- Dr Pamela Patrick
- Dr Erin Leif

You can email Amanda at amanda.oneil1@monash.edu if you have questions.

Why you're being asked

You're being invited because you have experience living in OOHC and have found going to school hard at some point.

Your Choice to Take Part

This information sheet explains what the study is about and what taking part would involve. You can read through it at your own pace, and you can ask questions at any time if something doesn't make sense.

If, after reading this information, you think you might like to take part, you can choose to share your contact details. Amanda will then get in touch with you to answer any questions you have and to work out a time with you that works for your interview.

After this conversation, you will be asked to complete a Consent Form to confirm that you wish to participate. You can keep a copy of this Explanatory Statement if you'd like.

If you are under 18, your carer or guardian will also need to give permission for you to take part. But even if an adult gives permission, you still get to decide for yourself. You will be asked to give your own assent (your 'yes') before being involved. If you don't want to take part, or you want to stop, your choice always comes first.

Taking part is completely your choice. It's okay to say no. If you decide not to participate, nothing bad will happen and it won't affect any support or services you receive. If you do take part, you can stop at any time, and you can skip any questions you don't want to answer.

Cultural Safety and Inclusion

Young people who take part may come from many different backgrounds - including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, young people from refugee or migrant families, and young people with different identities, cultures, abilities, or experiences.

To help make the study feel safe and respectful for everyone, the research team will:

- use strengths-based, non-judgmental language
- give you choice and control in how you take part
- have Indigenous advisors check the interview questions and materials
- invite a small group of young adults to try out the interview questions early and give feedback
- make changes if needed so the interview is easy to access, culturally safe, and comfortable for all young people

The goal is to make sure the whole process feels as safe, respectful, and comfortable as possible for everyone who chooses to participate.

What you'll be asked to do

If you decide you want to take part, you'll be asked to give your name and the best way to contact you (like your email or phone number). Sharing your details is your choice and will allow us to get in touch with you.

You'll then be invited to have a one-on-one interview with Amanda via Zoom. The interview will:

- take about 45-60 minutes
- include some questions about your experiences with school, especially when you found going to school difficult
- let you share what has helped, what hasn't helped, and what you think needs to change

You will receive the interview questions ahead of time so that you can have a look over them before meeting for your interview.

During the interview, you can:

- skip any questions
- take a break whenever you need one
- stop the interview at any time

With your permission, the interview will be recorded so your words are captured accurately. Zoom automatically creates a video file when recording, but only the sound of your voice will be used to create a written transcript using a secure Monash University transcription tool (Zoom AI Companion). After the transcript has been checked to make sure it is correct, both the audio and video files will be deleted. Nothing that identifies you will be uploaded outside Monash.

If you are under 18, your carer or guardian will need to give permission, and you will also be asked to give your own assent (your 'yes') before taking part.

A small group of young adults may be invited to take part in the interview early, as a 'pilot group.' This means those young adults would do the interview as normal, and afterwards they can share feedback about whether the questions felt clear, respectful, and easy to understand. If the interview questions stay the same, their interview will be included as part of the study. If any questions change, they may be asked a few extra questions later so their feedback can still be included.

Will you get anything for taking part?

You will receive a \$50 gift card as a token of appreciation for your time and participation in the interview.

You will also be helping improve how schools, carers, and services support young people in OOHC who find school hard. Your voice can help shape better systems for others in the future.

Young adults who take part in the pilot group will also help make the questions clearer and more comfortable for everyone.

Are there any risks?

Talking about school or your time in care might bring up tough feelings. If that happens:

- you can pause
- you can skip questions
- you can stop completely

You'll also get a list of support services you can contact if you want to talk to someone afterwards.

How your information will be kept private

Your privacy is really important. This means that:

- your name will not be used in any reports
- anything that could identify you will be removed
- a safe transcription tool will be used to turn your voice from the recording into text
- only the research team will hear the recordings and see any notes
- the written transcripts (with your name removed) will be stored safely for five years (or, if you are 16–17, until you turn 18 and then for another 15 years, as required by law)

You can ask for your interview to be withdrawn up to seven (7) days after you receive a copy of your transcript. This gives you time to read over what you said and decide if you still want it included. After seven days, your transcript will be fully de-identified and the audio/video recording deleted. Once this happens, we won't be able to tell which transcript is yours anymore, so it can't be taken out.

Your name and contact details will be kept safely with your consent or assent form. These details are not used in the study, but they might need to be shown to Monash Finance if they ask to check that the project followed the rules.

Any feedback you give about the interview questions will be kept private and won't be used as research data. Your interview itself will be included in the study.

There are a few times when Amanda might have to share information. If you say something that makes her worry that you or someone else is not safe, she may need to talk to someone who can help. If this happens, she will try to talk with you about it first.

Nothing you say will be shared with your carers, school, or caseworkers unless you ask for it or unless there is a serious safety concern.

Want to know the results later?

If you'd like to hear what the study finds, you can email Amanda at: amanda.oneil1@monash.edu

Questions or concerns

If you have questions about the study, email Amanda.

If you have concerns about how the research is being run, you can contact the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee at muhrec@monash.edu

Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. It's completely your choice whether you want to take part. If you decide that you're interested, you can share your contact details, and Amanda will be in touch shortly.

SUPPORT SERVICES

If you feel upset or want to talk to someone after the interview, you can contact:

- **Kids Helpline** - 1800 55 1800
Free, confidential counselling for young people aged 5–25. Available by phone, webchat, or email.
Website: <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>
- **Lifeline** - 13 11 14
24/7 crisis support. Offers confidential counselling and referrals for anyone experiencing emotional distress.
Website: <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>
- **Beyond Blue** - 1300 22 4636
Support for anxiety, depression, and emotional wellbeing. Available via phone, webchat, and email.
Website: <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>
- **Your OOHC caseworker or agency**
They can help you access support that is specific to your situation.
- **YARN** - 13 92 76
A culturally safe crisis support line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, available 24/7.
Website: <https://www.13yarn.org.au/>
- **Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, wellbeing, or community organisations**
These services can provide culturally safe support for young people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

You can also ask the research team if you want help finding the right service.