



ASeTTS
Assisting Torture
and Trauma Survivors

ASeTTS' School – Based Children's Programs

ASeTTS is a not for profit organisation providing services to people from refugee or refugee – like backgrounds who have survived experiences of torture and trauma.



Many children from refugee backgrounds have had traumatic experiences and, due to their age and relative voicelessness, the mental health and psycho-social needs of these children are often overlooked. Most government and non-government agencies working with refugees focus on adults and have limited interaction with children. Further, parents or guardians act as gatekeepers for children and due to a range of factors including a lack of understanding about the impact of trauma on children; a lack of knowledge about available support or how to access it; fear of stigmatisation; and their own personal struggles with trauma and settlement issues; may not be in a position to either identify that the child needs help nor able to take action even if they do. It is often the case that only when the child commences formal education that his or her behaviour may be noticed by a teacher who recognises the possibility of underlying mental health or psychosocial issues.

Over a number of years ASeTTS has built up considerable experience working with children from refugee backgrounds and as a result of this the agency now has sound expertise in delivering a core set of programs (as well as individual therapy) which can be highly effective in assisting children to deal with the impact of trauma and other mental health problems resulting from their refugee experience. These programs can be delivered on site at the school to groups. It is recommended that children who might require individual therapy are referred to ASeTTS through the normal referral channels. Programs include:

- Jungle Tracks
- Adventure Based Therapy
- Dramatherapy
- Art Therapy

Typically, ASeTTS does not receive funding for these programs. Therefore, ASeTTS does charge a fee for running programs in schools in order to recover costs. The fee for delivering each program is included in the information sheets for the individual programs.

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What is Involved in Having an ASeTTS' Children's Program at Your School?

The program information sheets explain the types of programs ASeTTS offer to schools and which children may benefit and how. If you believe your school has children who can benefit and would like to explore the option of a program more deeply, an ASeTTS' staff member can come to the school and talk to interested staff about the program(s), answer questions and discuss issues such as how to identify children who might benefit from the program, how to ensure the make-up of groups maximize positive outcomes, and the nature of feedback that will be provided to relevant teachers. It is important that this initial meeting between ASeTTS and the school takes place so that school staff are clear about what the program involves and that referrals to the program are appropriate in order to maximize the positive outcomes for the children.

It will be the responsibility of the school to ensure that parental/legal guardian permission is obtained for the children's participation and that all permission forms are completed and signed off prior to the program starting. If the program is held outside of normal school hours resulting in alternative transport having to be arranged for children to return home, this is also something the school will need to organise. The exception to this is the Adventure Based Therapy program run during school holidays in which case ASeTTS will organise transport for the children to and from the school to attend the program but this will be factored in to the overall cost of running the program.

The only other requirement ASeTTS has for running a program at a school is a suitable venue where the program can be conducted uninterrupted and disturbance to other learners is minimised.

To arrange an initial meeting to discuss ASeTTS' school – based programs, contact Amanda Gillett, Community Services Manager, on 9227 2700 or email reception@asetts.org.au

Further information about ASeTTS can be found at the website www.asetts.org.au

