

WOMEN AND MENTORING- YOUNG WOMEN'S PROGRAM:

Women and Mentoring (WAM) Young Women's Program provides early intervention support to cis and transgender women, and non-binary people aged 12–24 who are at risk of, or in the early stages of, involvement with the criminal justice system.

Operating in the Frankston, Mornington Peninsula, Kingston, Dandenong and Casey regions, the program offers voluntary, strengths-based mentoring support tailored to the unique needs and interests of each individual.

Participants are matched with a trained, screened and compassionate volunteer mentor who offers consistent emotional and practical support. The mentoring relationship is built on trust, empowerment, and mutual respect, allowing participants to explore new interests and pursue their goals at their own pace.

Through a steady and caring connection, participants can feel seen, build confidence, and strengthen their capacity to navigate life's challenges. Each mentoring relationship evolves based on what feels safe and empowering to the young person. Matches typically last 12 months or longer, providing support that goes beyond short-term interventions.

Mentors are not clinicians or case managers. However, their voluntary role creates space for a meaningful connection with a positive adult role model - someone who walks alongside the young person without judgment or agenda.



"Sometimes you just need someone to talk to. Not a counsellor, not a family member, just another woman who gets it."

THROUGH MENTORING, PARTICIPANTS ARE SUPPORTED TO:

- Build life skills and protective factors that reduce the risk of justice involvement
- Access community services and professional supports that address underlying issues
- Strengthen their confidence, identity, and sense of connection to community
- Identify and pursue meaningful goals led by their own choices and priorities

WHO IS THE PROGRAM FOR / WHO CAN BE REFERRED:

Participants are often navigating multiple, intersecting challenges linked to systemic disadvantage, limited access to opportunity, and unmet support needs. Some may have previous justice involvement, whilst others may be in vulnerable circumstances that increase the likelihood of future contact.

Common indicators/presentations may include:

- Disengagement from education or disrupted attendance
- Involvement with Child Protection or Youth Justice systems
- Limited access to safe, consistent, adult role models
- Home environments impacted by family violence, mental health challenges, or problematic substance use across generations
- Peer relationships that may pose safety concerns, including with known male offenders
- Engaging in behaviours that may draw attention from systems
- Social isolation and difficulties building or maintaining safe, healthy relationships
- Housing instability, including couch surfing or out-of-home care placement
- Heightened risk of grooming or exploitation
- Inconsistent engagement with services and would benefit from a consistent, community-based relationship outside of family or professional systems.

Please note: Before making a referral, ensure appropriate professional supports are in place - particularly where there are complex mental health or alcohol and other drug (AOD) concerns.

Mentoring is most effective when the young person is ready and able to engage. Consider the young person's current **Stability, Motivation and Capacity** to participate before referring.

REFERRAL PROCESS:

- Referrals can be made by professionals or through self-referral. Completed referral forms are emailed to the Young Women's Program inbox.
- The Program Coordinator will contact the young person to assess eligibility and interest. If eligible, the Program Coordinator will identify a suitable mentor and facilitates a match meeting.
- The mentoring relationship begins with regular (typically weekly) contact - either in person or remotely - to build trust and work on participant-led goals.
- The Program Coordinator maintains regular communication with both the mentor and participant to support a purposeful and sustainable connection that continues to meet the participants needs.

WHAT MENTORS CAN DO:

WAM mentors provide personal and practical assistance; help participants develop self-advocacy skills to find and use community resources; and support them to achieve their individual goals.

Mentors support participants to:

- Attend court, Youth Justice, or other appointments.
- Plan their week, manage time and set priorities
- Practice stress management and emotional regulation strategies
- Explore education, training, and employment pathways
- Talk about relationships, boundaries, or decision-making.
- Navigate and access community services
- Develop problem-solving skills and confidence/curiosity to consider different perspectives
- Catch up over a coffee or bubble tea.
- Walk or exercise together
- Explore new interests and recreational activities

WHAT MENTORS DON'T DO:

Our mentors are community members who volunteer their time and whilst they provide consistent and meaningful support, they are not responsible for:

- Ongoing transport - mentors may occasionally drive participants to shared activities, but do not provide regular transport to appointments
- Case management
- Housing support or placement
- Financial assistance
- In home visits (meetings occur in community or over the phone/ virtually)
- Counselling or clinical/professional services
- Emergency or crisis response

If you would like to find out more, please visit our website:

www.womenandmentoring.org.au

Email us at: ywp@womenandmentoring.org.au

Or call our Young Women's Program team:

Shaylee Goodhart: 0401 371 337 (Casey and Dandenong)

Cyanna McLaren: 0403 581 259 (Frankston, Mornington Peninsula and Kingston)