

## DETECT Schools Study Information Sheet & Consent Form for Parents of children in Years 7-12

Dear Parent/Carer

<b>Project title</b>	DETECT Schools Study: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 in Western Australian Schools – COVID-19 Wellbeing Survey
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<b>WA Government Partners</b>	Department of Health Department of Education

**You and your child are invited to take part in a new research project called the “DETECT Schools Study: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 in Western Australian Schools”**

You and your child have been invited to take part in the project because your child’s school is one of the 80 schools participating in the project.

This Information Sheet tells you about the research project. It explains the processes involved with taking part. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research and if you want your child to take part in the research.

### **What is COVID-19?**

A new virus called SARS-CoV-2 emerged in China in late 2019 and has now spread around the world in a pandemic. The illness this virus causes is called COVID-19. Most people with COVID-19 have mild flu like symptoms. Some will have no symptoms or signs of illness at all. This study is about testing healthy students and staff at school in WA to see if we can find anyone with COVID-19.

### **What is the purpose of this project?**

COVID-19 has had a huge impact on the way we live. With the rates of COVID-19 in Western Australia (WA) remaining low, we are at a critical point where the Government is working hard to find out how to get things back to normal, as safely and as quickly, as we can.

One thing we don’t know much about, is the rates of COVID-19 in those who may not have any symptoms (asymptomatic). As part of a larger community study to determine the occurrence of COVID-19 in people without symptoms in WA, the WA Education and Health Departments, in partnership with Telethon Kids Institute, are undertaking research in schools. The research will help us answer three main questions:

1. Is there any undetected COVID-19 infection in school students and staff (without symptoms)?
2. Do students and staff at schools play a role in spreading COVID-19, if we find it?

3. How are school staff, students, and their families coping during this challenging time? Is their wellbeing impacted?

We are asking you to help us answer these questions.

It is hoped the DETECT Schools Study will assist in building an even stronger evidence-base for the WA (and Australian) Government to make the best policy decisions they can, and to provide the support to schools and families that they need. The research has three projects:

**Project 1:** COVID-19 Testing in those without symptoms (asymptomatic) - A random sample of up to 150 consenting staff and students from each of the 40 schools will be tested (throat/nose swab) for COVID-19 to find out if there is any undetected infection in the school population. This testing will be completed at each school, every month, for three to six months in total. This will give us immediate evidence about the level of asymptomatic infection in our schools, so we can help WA (and Australia) confirm that it is safe to keep schools open if we find no evidence of COVID-19

**Project 2:** Tracking Transmission in Schools - If we do find that someone in the school has COVID-19, in addition to standard Public Health and Department of Education responses, we will do more testing with people they are in close contact with. Any close contacts of the person with COVID-19 (classmates, teachers, etc) will be invited to do two COVID-19 tests across two weeks, (whether they have symptoms or not), and keep a daily symptom diary. By doing more testing, we can find out more about how COVID-19 spreads in schools, and how we can prevent that in the future.

**Project 3:** Wellbeing survey - Staff, parents and students of various ages will receive online surveys to complete, to gain a better understanding of the impact COVID-19 is having now on the school community's physical, social and emotional wellbeing.

This is an invitation for you and your child to take part in the third project of the **COVID-19 research project in schools - the Wellbeing Survey**. This is your choice.

You and your child have been invited to take part because your child in Years 7-12 attends one of the 80 public schools, education support settings and residential colleges participating in the project. Your child's school is sharing this information with you.

### **What does participation in this project involve?**

#### **Your participation**

With your consent, you will be asked to complete two brief 15-minute online surveys at a time convenient to you.

The first online survey will be completed this term and the second survey will be completed in November, 2020. The surveys will be emailed to you by the Telethon Kids Institute.

You will be asked to answer questions about

- The impact of COVID-19 on your child(ren), e.g. schooling, relationships, internet use
- The impact of COVID-19 on you, e.g. work, family functioning
- Your feelings about your wellbeing
- Your children's and your own age, gender, languages spoken at home, education, birthplace, cultural background, and number of children in your family
- How you feel about the COVID-19 testing in your children's school

### **Your child's participation**

***If you do not opt out of your child participating*** your child will be asked to complete two brief 15-minute online surveys during school time. The first survey will be completed this term and the second survey will be completed in November, 2020.

If your child is attending school, they will complete the online survey at school in class time. Your child's classroom teacher will follow a guide which explains how to access the survey and assist with questions.

If your child is learning at home, they will be asked to complete the online survey at home. Parents will be provided with a guide explaining how to access the survey and assist with questions.

Children will be asked to answer questions about

- Their age, gender, languages spoken at home
- How COVID-19 has affected them at school, at home and with their relationships
- Their feelings about their wellbeing
- Whether they participated in the COVID-19 test (nose and throat swabs) for this study and if so, how they felt about it

### **Do we have to take part in this research project?**

Participation in any research project is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part or do not wish for your child to take part, you do not have to.

You will be asked to complete a Participant Consent Form and you will be given a copy to keep. Before starting each survey, your child will be asked to provide consent e.g. if they would like to fill out the survey or not. If they don't want to complete the survey they do not have to.

Your decision whether you or your child take part or do not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your relationship with your child's school or your relationship with the Department of Education.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

There may be no direct benefit from this research. However, possible benefits to the community may include increased understanding of how COVID-19 is affecting students, their parents and school staff - both inside and outside the classroom – to enable the Department of Education to provide appropriate support measures.

### **What are the possible risks and disadvantages of taking part?**

#### **Possible risks and disadvantages for you**

You may feel that some of the questions we ask are stressful or upsetting. If you do not wish to answer a question, you may skip it and go to the next question, or you may stop immediately. If you become upset or distressed as a result of your participation in the research project, information about support services will be provided at the beginning and end of the online survey.

#### **Possible risks and disadvantages for your child**

Most children who have participated in similar research have enjoyed the experience and like to feel heard and valued in their opinions. However, some children may feel that some of the questions we ask are stressful or upsetting. If they do not wish to answer a question, they may skip it and go to the next question, or they may stop immediately. Schools will ensure either the school psychologist, nurse or school chaplain is available if any student appears upset or stressed as a result of

completing the survey. All students will be given information about the Kids Helpline and Youth Beyond Blue.

If your child suffers any distress or psychological injury as a result of this research project, you should contact your child's school as soon as possible. The school will help you to arrange appropriate support for your child.

#### **What if we want to withdraw from this research project?**

If you decide you want to take part and later change your mind, you and your child are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. Please contact DETECT-SCHOOLS@telethonkids.org.au about your decision or contact your child's school.

Please note it will not be possible to withdraw any of your survey information or your child's survey information once the surveys have been submitted because the information is provided anonymously.

#### **What will happen to information about me and my child?**

No information from your surveys will be able to be connected to your child or to you – **the surveys are anonymous**. The researchers would like to see if the way you or your child answer the survey this term is different to the way you both answer the survey in November (if you both choose to do the survey again). You and your child will be asked to develop a unique 'code' that will allow the researchers to link your responses from the first and second survey. To develop the code you and your child will be asked five questions, e.g. What is the last letter of your name? What is the last letter of your middle name?

The survey data will be kept permanently in a password protected computer and a secure server. Your responses and your child's responses will only be used for the purpose of this COVID-19 research and they will only be disclosed if required by law.

It is anticipated that the results of this research will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that your child or your child's school cannot be identified.

If you do decide that you and your child will participate in the project by completing two surveys, you will consent to the research team collecting and using anonymous personal information about you and your child e.g. Your children's and your own age, gender, languages spoken at home, education, birthplace, cultural background, and number of children in your family.

#### **What happens when the research project ends?**

A report of the overall findings from every school will be sent by the Department of Education to each school to share with all families and school staff. Overall results will be used by the Departments of Education and Health to inform policy decisions and to provide appropriate support measures to schools.

#### **Is this project approved?**

All research in Australia involving humans is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this research project have been approved by the Child and Adolescent Health Service (CAHS) HREC and the West Australian Aboriginal Human Ethics Committee (WAAHEC). This project will be conducted according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies. This project has also met the policy requirements of the Department of Education.

### **What are the next steps once I have decided if we participate or not?**

#### **Your next steps**

Please complete the consent form online to indicate if you will participate in the project or will not participate in the project.

If you will participate in the project, the Telethon Kids Institute will email you a link to complete a 15 minute survey. The first online survey will be completed this term and the second survey will be completed in November, 2020.

#### **Next steps for your child**

If you decide your child *can* participate in the surveys, ***you do not need to complete the Opt out form.*** When the online surveys are given to students in class your child will be asked to provide consent e.g. if they would like to fill out the survey or not. If they don't want to complete the survey they do not have to and they will be given another activity to complete.

If you decide that your child *cannot* participate in the surveys, ***you need to complete the Opt out form.*** Your child will not be asked to complete a survey. When the online surveys are given to students in class your child will be given another activity to complete.

#### **Further information and who to contact**

The person you may need to contact will depend on the nature of your query.

If you want any further information concerning this research or if you have any queries which may be related to involvement in the project, please contact the Telethon Kids Institute at [DETECT-SCHOOLS@telethonkids.org.au](mailto:DETECT-SCHOOLS@telethonkids.org.au).

If you require advice or support for your child's education due to COVID-19, please contact your child's school principal.

If you have any concerns and/or complaints about the project, the way it is being conducted or your rights or child's rights as a research participant, and would like to speak to someone independent of the project, please contact The Executive Director of Medical Services at PCH, phone 6456 2222. Your concerns will be drawn to the attention of the Ethics Committee who is monitoring the study.

Yours sincerely



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