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MEDIA RELEASE: GIDGET FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA MORE CONNECTED THAN EVER

COVID-19 TELEHEALTH SUPPORT AND RESOURCES FOR EXPECTANT AND NEW PARENTS: POWERED BY GIDGET FOUNDATION'S START TALKING TELEHEALTH SERVICE

Gidget Foundation Australia has moved all support services to telehealth and developed a new range of online resources in response to escalating concerns about the emotional impact of COVID-19 on expectant and new parents.

The experience of perinatal depression and anxiety is even harder during these uncertain times. However, while the community at large is isolating, Gidget Foundation Australia is staying more connected than ever.

Gidget Foundation Australia support services are experiencing significantly increased demand from vulnerable expectant and new parents who need help now more than ever.

In response to the fast-paced health authority updates, all face-to-face support was moved to telehealth from Monday 16 March. Every single pre-booked face to face psychology appointment has been carried out via video as a result. This is how the Foundation will continue to deliver support services until things ease.

Visits to the Foundation's website have increased by over 50% on the same time period last year, as anxious expectant and new parents are seeking information and support in this unprecedented global health crisis. Connection, kindness and reliable information is essential to lessen the impact of anxiety on expectant and new parents.

A new microsite has been created to centralise all of the Foundation's COVID-19 resources, new fact sheets, links and access to its free telehealth service: <https://gidgetfoundation.org.au/get-support/covid-19-support/>

Gidget Foundation Australia CEO, Arabella Gibson, said that the Foundation is working tirelessly to ensure that vulnerable parents in need are able to access the support they need at this uncertain time.

"Expectant and new parents can feel a sense of isolation at the best of times, the COVID-19 outbreak has heightened anxiety levels in a way that has not been seen before. Moving all of our support to telehealth means that we can utilise our pre-existing Start Talking telehealth service to help more parents in need, by offering free psychology support at a mutually suitable time from the safety of home.

"Never has there been a more important time for us all to come together and rally around those who need our care, kindness and compassion most. Isolating at home can exacerbate anxiety and the feeling of isolation that is common in new parents," Gibson added.

Gidget Foundation Australia Clinical Team Manager and Psychologist, Christine Barnes, said that due to COVID-19, anxiety and stress is on the rise for many people.

"It is normal that when we feel threatened, we can experience a range of thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations that might be uncomfortable. Accessing accurate information and appropriate support is essential to lower the amount of distress you may be feeling," Barnes said.



There are a range of evidence-based ways that expectant and new parents can reduce COVID-19 related anxiety and stress:

- Stay connected to family and friends using alternate contact methods such as phone and video calls
- Minimise exposure to news and social media, limit content to reputable sources
- Keep routine in each day as much as possible and make time for something enjoyable at home each day
- Practice stretching, breathing and mindfulness exercises
- Look at bedtime rituals and limit screen time in the hour before bed
- Do something for others, acts of kindness are beneficial to both parties
- Reach out for help and support
- Contact your GP or other health professional to discuss any emotional wellbeing issues and concerns

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CONTACT:

Arabella Gibson
CEO Gidget Foundation Australia
M: 0412 906 157
E: arabella.gibson@gidgetfoundation.org.au