



## MEDIA RELEASE

**Embargoed to: Tuesday, November 27 2018**

### **MOST TEENAGERS TURN TO PARENTS AND FRIENDS FOR HELP**

The vast majority of Australian adolescents seek help for their everyday personal and emotional problems from their parents and friends rather than health professionals, according to new research by the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Institute Director, Anne Hollonds said *Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* found that seeking help from informal sources such as a friend, sibling or parent was more common amongst 14–15 year olds than from formal sources such as a teacher, family doctor or mental health professional. Non-face-to-face sources such as the internet or a phone helpline were the least common source of help for this age group.

‘While not all adolescents report having personal or emotional problems, the vast majority do. The study of 14–15 year olds found that 91% of girls and 81% of boys reported having emotional or personal problems within the past 12 months,’ she said.

‘The study found that the vast majority of adolescents (97%) reported they did seek help when they needed it and they would be willing to seek help if they had a personal problem in the future.

At age 14–15, 74% of adolescents reported seeking help for a personal or emotional problem from a friend, 69% sought help from a parent, while 25% sought help from a teacher and around 20% sought help on the internet. Only 9% sought help from a mental health professional, 6% from a doctor and 2% from a helpline.

These findings highlight that family and friends are an extremely important source of support for adolescents with personal or emotional problems, with the majority not using formal services, even online.’

Institute Executive Manager Dr Galina Daraganova noted that adolescents with mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety and a history of self-harm, had different patterns of help-seeking behaviour compared to adolescents with no mental health issues.

‘The study found that adolescents with mental health issues were more likely to seek help from health professionals and non-face-to-face sources than those without mental health issues,’ she said.

‘Gender differences were also observed for those adolescents with mental health issues. Overall, in the last 12 months girls with depressive symptoms and a history of self-harm were more likely to seek formal help, compared to boys with similar problems.

In addition, adolescents who reported that they had higher levels of support from family and friends were more willing to seek help for personal or emotional problems than those without that support.’

To download a copy of the AIFS’ *Growing Up In Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children 2017 Annual Statistical Report Adolescent help seeking* go to <http://www3.aifs.gov.au/institute/media/docs/tGxliJ48sMY/LSAC-ASR-2017-Chap7.pdf>

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AIFS conducts original research to increase understanding of Australian families and the issues that affect them, see [aifs.gov.au](http://aifs.gov.au)