

# **Barriers to Accessing Mental Health Services for Young People in South Australia: Findings from the South Australian Youth Forum**

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## **Background:**

Accessing mental health services is critical for the well-being of young people, yet numerous barriers impede their ability to receive adequate support. This study aimed to identify the key obstacles young people face in accessing mental health services in South Australia, understand the impact of these barriers, and provide proposed recommendations for improving mental health support systems.

## **Methods:**

The study was conducted by the South Australian Youth Forum, an initiative led by young people for young people. The study employed a qualitative approach, gathering data through focus groups and surveys conducted by the South Australian Youth Forum. Consenting participants included diverse young people aged 14-19 from various socio-economic backgrounds and regions, including metropolitan, regional, and rural areas. Data were analysed thematically to identify recurring barriers and potential solutions as perceived by the participants.

## **Results:**

The analysis revealed several significant barriers:

1. Educational Gaps
2. Financial Constraints
3. Inadequate School Support
4. Social Media Influence
5. Research Deficits
6. Waiting Lists
7. Support for Disabled Young People
8. Confidentiality Concerns

## **Conclusions:**

The study confirms that young people in South Australia face multiple barriers to accessing mental health services. To address these issues, recommendations were proposed, including further education, promoting media literacy, and school-based mental health professionals and services. The full list is found in the Framework. These findings highlight the necessity for systemic changes to improve young people's accessibility to mental health services.

## **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

The South Australian Youth Forum and the authors recognise the significant contributions made by various stakeholders in addressing mental health service access and related issues. We also acknowledge the importance of transparency in disclosing potential conflicts of interest. The authors declare no conflicts of interest. This ensures clarity and maintains the integrity of our findings and recommendations.