

‘While I’m Away’ app for parents and caregivers

What is this app about?

While I’m Away is a tool to help parents support the mental health and wellbeing of their child should they need to be cared for by someone else (e.g. if a parent needs to go into hospital, travel for work, or is separated from their child for any period of time).

The app guides parents through a series of questions about the routine care of their children, including:

- Key people
- Daily routines
- Important health and medical information
- Interests, hobbies, preferences
- Social and emotional support
- Ways they would like to keep in touch while separated.

Parents are also asked to nominate someone to be their child’s caregiver. This person will receive the information collected in the app.

Who is this app for?

The app is designed to be used by parents and caregivers. Parents can create a unique profile for each of their children and assign a caregiver to each child. Profiles can be created for children of any age. The caregiver can use the app to access care plans and keep updated on changes to plans in real time.

Why was this app developed?

While I’m Away is based on Emerging Minds’ existing shared care plans. Converting these paper-based plans into an app meant creating a more dynamic, portable, and easily accessible tool that parents and their nominated caregivers can use anytime via their mobile phone. Importantly, While I’m Away allows parents to continue to support their child’s mental health and wellbeing, even if they are separated for an extended period of time.



How was this app developed?

While I’m Away was developed in partnership with parents, health professionals, researchers and app developers. It draws on knowledge, evidence and experience about practical strategies parents can use to ensure their children are cared for while they are apart. A focus group of three practitioners and five child and family partners was involved throughout the development of the app, providing input into its structure, content, and purpose, and helping to test and troubleshoot the final version of the app.

What are the benefits of this app?

While I’m Away allows parents to share with their nominated caregiver what is important for their child’s continued wellbeing during the parent’s absence. The parent can create separate profiles for multiple children, allowing them to provide information unique to each child.

Having a well-informed caregiver can support the child's routine, limit disruptions to their care, and provide tailored social and emotional support.

The app version of the shared care plans can be found and accessed more easily than either a paper or PDF resource, making them much more user friendly. Another benefit is that apps can be updated in real time. As a child develops over time, the parent can make changes to the plan that will then be automatically updated in the caregiver's version of the app. This can be done instantaneously, saving parents time and effort.

How should parents approach the app?

Parents are encouraged to view the app as a tool to support their child's mental health and wellbeing when they are unable to do so themselves due to a period of separation. The more information parents can provide about the care of their child, the more equipped the caregiver will be to connect with and provide support to the child. Parents do not have to complete the whole plan in one sitting, as their progress will be saved as they go.

How can practitioners support parents to use the app?

While the app can be used alone, some parents may prefer to go through the app with the support of a practitioner. Practitioners can work to support parents in articulating the care they would like their children to receive whilst they are apart. A practitioner's role may be to support parents to navigate the app, understand why it can be important to share particular information with a caregiver, and provide any support to parents who may face barriers to completing the app (e.g. parents with limited literacy or technology skills, or from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds).

How can parents and caregivers access the app?

While I'm Away is free and can be downloaded from the Apple App Store or Google Play. You can also find links to download the app on the Emerging Minds website. Once downloaded, users can create an account by selecting either 'I am a parent' or 'I am a caregiver' when prompted. Parents can also email a PDF version of their child's plan to caregivers who do not use a mobile device.

