



PREAMBLE

Stella Maris College (the College) is a school of Good Samaritan Education established in 1931 in the Benedictine tradition. The policies of the College give expression to its values and ethos and/or reflect the legal requirements of a school registered and accredited by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).

POLICY

Within the College environment, students may experience a wide range of behavioural, emotional, social and psychological issues that, if left untreated, may jeopardise their wellbeing and learning. Examples include mental health concerns, friendship difficulties, family breakdowns, relationship issues, eating disorders, grief and loss, bullying, traumatic events, alcohol and substance abuse, self-esteem and identity difficulties.

It is our policy that:

- Professional counselling services are made available to all students;
- The College's counselling service be highly visible to students and the general College community; and
- The College's counselling service is easy to access.

PROCEDURE

The availability of the College's counselling service is highly visible to students and to the wider College community. Initiatives to ensure the visibility of the College's counselling service include:

- Informing all staff as to the nature and availability of the services;
- Physical positioning of the counselling service in a discrete, yet easily accessible space;
- Providing contact details for the counselling service on the College's public website;
- Providing contact details for the counselling service in the Staff Handbook
- Providing students and parents/guardians with information regarding the counselling service at parent/guardian information evenings;
- Providing information regarding adolescent development in the College newsletter on an ongoing basis;
- Providing parents/guardians with substantial information via the Parent Library;
- Counsellor involvement in the College's Pastoral Care Program:
 - Administering mental health screening tools when appropriate;
 - Acknowledging and responding to the College's Awesome Schools Survey Data;
 - Attending camps/retreats in a supportive role
 - Making presentations to Year Groups and assemblies as required
 - Arranging external support services to present to staff and students
 - Home visits when appropriate with Principal consent
- Counselling sessions will focus on being supportive and offering problem centred outcomes. If appropriate, the counsellor may take a joint approach and involve other staff;
- Parents/guardians will be involved with the student's counselling when required.

Support Procedures:

- Students do not need a referral in order to use the College counselling service.
- Referral process:

*Student, Parent/Guardian, Head of Year, PC Teacher or Teacher makes a request for counselling
(via phone, email or in person)*



Information is provided to student about counselling and confidentiality



*Communication as appropriate with parents/guardians, teachers and external professionals
(The Counsellor may initiate a College Wellbeing Program as per the Student Engagement and Management Policy)*

Students:

- Are encouraged to seek advice from the College Counsellor should they have concerns and require assistance;
- Are responsible for ensuring that appointments made during class time do not clash with assessments. Counselling sessions may also be held in breaks or before or after class times;
- Are assured of the confidential nature of the discussions between themselves and the counsellor. However, at times it may be necessary for the counsellor to divulge the contents of discussions or records if it is considered necessary for the student's welfare to discharge the College's duty of care to the student; and
- Will be consulted with regard to information provided to the student's teachers should this be necessary and appropriate.

Parents/guardians:

- May seek advice from the counsellor on a range of issues such as educational, developmental and mental health concerns;
- Are encouraged to refer their daughter to the College's counselling service should they have concerns;
- Are assured of confidentiality of discussions held between the student, their parents/guardians and the counsellor to the extent that information will only be made accessible to other College staff on an as needed basis;
- Will be included in discussions, along with their daughter, regarding referrals to external professionals, e.g. psychologists, paediatricians, psychiatrists; and
- Will be provided with a list of suitable practitioners. The counsellor will facilitate referrals upon request and will be entitled to receive reports from the external practitioner.

Teachers

- Are encouraged to refer students to the College's counselling service should they have concerns;
- Are encouraged to discuss concerns they may have regarding individual students in their class who are attending counselling.

Wellbeing Team Members

- Are encouraged to refer students to the College's counselling services should they have concerns;
- Work collaboratively with the counsellor to provide support to students.

Counsellor/s:

- Where necessary and appropriate, will inform parents/guardians of the nature of the counselling services involving their daughter, having regard to confidentiality;
- Where necessary and appropriate, may discuss the student's circumstances with the student's teachers, having regard to confidentiality;
- Work collaboratively with the Wellbeing Team and Deputy Principal to provide support to students and to deliver an effective Pastoral Care Program;
- Will provide general feedback to the student's Pastoral Care Teacher and Head of Year on an as needed basis;
- Will report to the Deputy Principal regularly to provide general feedback on counselling services within the College and specifically on individual matters on an as needed basis;
- In the case of a Mandatory Report, will inform the College Principal/Deputy Principal prior to the report being made to the Department of Family and Community Services;
- Maintain appropriate records including details of the student's name, the date of each session, those present at the session and a brief summary of the main issues discussed;

- Maintain records of meetings, emails and/or telephone conversations regarding the student with parents, staff and external specialists; and
- Acknowledge that all records made by them remain the property of the College. Access to counselling records will only be provided where appropriate legal requirements are met.

Implementation

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- Staff training in identifying vulnerable students and effective referral processes;
- Student and parent/guardian education and information;
- Development of a culture of awareness where students look out for other students and encourage each other to seek help;
- Effective referral management, within and outside the College community;
- Effective communication and incident notification procedures; and
- Effective record keeping procedures.

VERSION 1

Policy Approved: March 2018

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