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APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY

This policy applies to owned and controlled Anglican schools in the Diocese of Brisbane and outlines the roles and responsibilities of Counsellors employed in these schools and other staff when responding to students' counselling, mental health and wellbeing needs. Separately incorporated schools and those outside the Diocese of Brisbane have approval from the Anglican Schools Commission (ASC) to use this policy and the *Counselling Services in Anglican Schools Guidelines* (the Guidelines).

1. SCOPE

This policy outlines the Anglican Church Southern Queensland's (ACSQ) commitment to provide high quality counselling services in all Anglican schools that employ a school based Counsellor. By providing quality counselling services, these schools will help to positively support the mental health and wellbeing of students, including those with more complex or intensive levels of need.

The school based Counsellor's role may include:

- helping to optimise students' potential and enhancing overall student wellbeing;
- promoting and helping maintain effective learning and positive physical and mental health;
- helping students develop appropriate skills, attitudes and pro-social values and behaviours;
- identifying and help to resolve personal, career and academic issues;
- building the school community's understanding of student mental health and wellbeing issues.

This policy and associated guidelines apply to the delivery of school based counselling services, staff employed as school Counsellors and staff referring to, or working with, school Counsellors.

2. EXCLUSIONS

The policy and guidelines do not apply to:

- ongoing counselling services provided to school staff by other professionals;
- employees who only provide careers advice who are not employed in a counselling role;
- counselling or psychological assessments or reports that do not relate to student learning and participation, wellbeing or career planning; and
- the actions or decisions of other professionals employed by external agencies.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Anglican schools are strongly committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students attending an Anglican school. Anglican schools will ensure that, where a school based counselling service is provided, students and their families have access to high quality, evidence based and ethically informed counselling services, programs and interventions.

Anglican schools are also committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of counselling staff and providing Counsellors with the resources necessary to fulfill their roles and responsibilities.

POLICY STATEMENT

Student mental health and wellbeing

Anglican schools recognise that supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students is vitally important and integral to students' learning, participation in the classroom and school community and achievement of longer term life outcomes.

To better support students' mental health and wellbeing, Anglican schools will, when required, help students and families access counselling services, either through a school based Counsellor or by providing information about relevant internal or external supports.

Where a school chooses to offer a school based counselling service, the Counsellor will provide high quality, evidence based and ethically informed services to students, families and staff.

Duty of care

All Anglican schools and their staff, including school based Counsellors, have a duty of care to all students enrolled at the school. The Principal must ensure this duty of care is fulfilled when a student receives a school based counselling service.

3. THE SCHOOL BASED COUNSELLING SERVICE

Where a school chooses to provide a counselling service, the school must ensure:

- the counselling services are delivered by professionals with the required expertise, qualifications and current professional registration or accreditation;
- the operation and location of the service ensures the safety of students and Counselling staff;
- the Principal, Counsellor and other staff understand and action their roles and responsibilities;
- regular communication between the Counsellor, their line manager and/or the Principal¹; and
- the Counsellor has the support and resources necessary to deliver the counselling services.

4. PLANNING AND DELIVERING COUNSELLING SERVICES

The following matters must be taken into consideration by the Counsellor, their line manager and/or the Principal when planning and delivering counselling services in an Anglican school. Refer also to the more detailed information outlined in the Guidelines.

Timing of counselling sessions with students

In most cases, counselling sessions with students will occur during school hours.

When a Counsellor intends to provide services outside of school hours, when the majority of staff have left the school grounds or during school holidays, such an arrangement must only occur with the knowledge and approval of the Principal. When agreed by the Counsellor and the Principal, consent may also be sought from the parent.

Frequency of counselling sessions with students

Generally, a school based Counsellor will assist students and families by providing brief interventions (see the Definitions) to resolve personal, counselling or careers related issues.

When circumstances arise that require the Counsellor to provide longer term or more complex counselling services (see the Definitions), the Counsellor must obtain the required student and/or parent consent, including limitations of confidentiality, and advise the Principal of the student's name, the type of service to be provided and the rationale for the extended service. (Refer to Section 12.2 of the Guidelines - Requirements when providing longer term or more complex interventions)

Location of counselling facilities

All counselling sessions will take place on school premises in facilities that maintain student privacy, ensure the safety of both the student and Counsellor and fulfil obligations in relation to duty of care.

Communication about a student's whereabouts

The Counsellor must maintain accurate records of all appointments with students and ensure information about a student's whereabouts is communicated to relevant staff and in accordance with school policy and procedures.

¹ Reporting arrangements may vary across Anglican Schools. In some schools, the Counsellor/s may report directly to the Principal and not to a separate line manager.

Consent for services provided by the Counsellor

Valid consent must be obtained prior to the provision of counselling services.

- *Verbal consent* may be used for brief interventions, academic or career counselling or participation in group or information sessions.
- *Written consent*, including limitations of confidentiality, must be obtained from a student and/or parent before commencing a longer term or more complex counselling intervention or administering a psycho-educational test, particularly where the student information will be transmitted and/or stored outside Australia.
- *Parental consent* must be obtained when the student is in primary school or when the Counsellor has deemed that the student does not have the capacity to give informed consent.
- *Student consent* may be relied upon when the student is in secondary school and is deemed to have capacity to give informed consent.

The Counsellor must inform the Principal when intending to provide services to a primary school student without parent knowledge and consent. (Refer to Section 17 of the Guidelines).

Accountabilities and reporting

To ensure the provision of quality counselling services and fulfillment of duty of care obligations:

1. the Counsellor must meet on a regular basis with their line manager (at least twice a term);
2. the Counsellor must periodically report to the Principal (at least twice a year) about their activities and the services provided through the counselling service; and
3. the Counsellor, their line manager and/or the Principal will, at least once a year, review the services provided to ensure they address the type and volume of need within the school.

In those schools where the Principal is the Counsellor's line manager, the activities outlined in points 2 and 3 may be completed during the meetings referred to in point 1.

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

The *Counselling Services in Anglican Schools Guidelines* include more detailed information to support the implementation of this policy, including: relevant legislation and references; related documents, including Codes of Conduct, Ethical Standards and Codes of Professional Practice²; abbreviations; definitions; and key terms.

6. FEEDBACK/COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIANCE

The ACSQ requires compliance by all schools with this policy and implementation of the policy in line with the *Counselling Services in Anglican Schools Guidelines*.

When a student, parent or member of staff has concerns about or wishes to provide feedback on the counselling services delivered or a Counsellor's interactions with a student, they should discuss their concerns or feedback with the Principal who, if required, will respond in accordance with the [Complaints Management in Anglican Schools Policy and Procedures](#).

When the concerns relate to inappropriate behaviour by the Counsellor towards a student, the Principal must comply with the [Student Protection in Anglican Schools Policy and Procedures](#).

The Principal will ensure the policy and *Counselling Services in Anglican Schools: Implementation Guidelines* are made available to the members of the school community.

7. POLICY REVIEW

The Diocesan Council, or its delegate, in consultation with schools will review this policy and the Guidelines one (1) year from the effective date.

² Each counsellor will be guided by the Code of Ethics and Practice Standards relevant to their professional association and/or accrediting body.

8. DEFINITIONS

Brief intervention

It is acknowledged that different counselling professionals use different terms to describe the nature of their interactions with their clients.

For the purposes of the *Counselling Services in Anglican Schools Policy and Guidelines*, the term 'brief intervention' will be used to describe a short term intervention by the Counsellor where the service is completed in a limited number of contacts, for example in 3 or 4 contacts.

Over the course of a school year, the Counsellor may provide one or more brief interventions to a student which are discreet blocks of service that arise as the student identifies new issues or needs and seeks the Counsellor's assistance in resolving the matters.

Counsellor (including School Psychologist)

For the purposes of this policy, a Counsellor is:

- a skilled professional with specialist knowledge and expertise in relation to counselling and career guidance who understands educational systems and the unique complexities of schools and classrooms; and
- an individual who has been employed by an Anglican School and works in that school on a full-time, part-time or casual basis.

A Counsellor may be:

- an educator with teaching qualifications and Masters level postgraduate qualifications in guidance and counselling who is a member of the [Queensland Guidance and Counselling Association](#) or the [Australian Counselling Association](#); or
- a psychologist registered with the [Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency](#) who may also have membership of the [Australian Psychological Society](#); or
- a social work professional accredited with the [Australian Association of Social Workers](#) who has experience in an educational setting.

Longer term or more complex intervention

It is acknowledged that different counselling professionals use different terms to describe the nature of their interactions with their clients.

For the purposes of the *Counselling Services in Anglican Schools Policy and Guidelines*, the term 'longer term or more complex intervention' will be used to describe a service provided by a school based Counsellor which:

- involves longer term contact with a student, for example more than 3 or 4 sessions, in relation to an ongoing issue or counselling need – for instance, a student's mental health condition may require school based case management over more than six months by the Counsellor as part of a mental health plan coordinated by a psychologist, General Practitioner, Counsellor or private psychiatrist; or
- due to the complexity or level of risk associated with the concerns, would necessitate obtaining valid written consent for the services and/or may require the sharing of information to ensure compliance with duty of care or legislative obligations or to enable the development of a support plan.

Valid Consent

The Office of the Information Commissioner has defined the key elements of valid consent as: voluntary, informed, specific and current.

Voluntary consent means agreement must be freely given and not based on the person being tricked, forced or threatened if agreement is not given. Informed consent means the individual has been given enough information to understand: the information to be collected; the purpose; who can access the information; and the consequences of agreeing or refusing agreement. Specific consent means the individual is given clear information not broad statements. Current consent means agreement is relevant to the particular time and circumstances. An agreement may not be current if more than twelve months old.