Counselling Services (Student)

Counselling Services
Within a 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 illnesses, friendship difficulties, family breakdowns, relationship issues, eating disorders, bullying, traumatic events, alcohol and substance abuse, self esteem and identity difficulties.

Presbyterian Ladies’ College provides short term professional counselling services to assist students and their families deal with issues that may hinder their development.

Presbyterian Ladies' College's Policy
Presbyterian Ladies’ College is committed to providing a safe environment and assisting students develop appropriate skills and attitudes to resolve problems in academic, psychological, emotional and social contexts.

It is our policy that:

- Professional counselling and psycho-education services be made available to students, staff and families regarding student’s psychological health and well being;
- The college’s counselling services be accessible to students and the general college community; and
- Psychologists work within the ethical guidelines as laid out by APS.
- Provide preventative and point of need services directly to students, parents and teachers;
- Provide counselling services to support students in managing short term issues at no additional cost.
- Where there are ongoing or acute concerns, beyond which the school Psychologists can reasonably be expected to provide for, students will be referred to external providers.

Counselling Services
Students do not need a referral in order to use the college counselling services.

These services can be accessed by all students simply by contacting the counsellor direct by email or through Student Services.

College counselling services are free for all students.

Accessibility of Counselling Services
The availability of the college’s counselling services are accessible to students and to the wider college community. Initiatives to ensure accessibility of the college’s counselling services include:

- Training all staff as to the nature and availability of the services;
- Providing contact details for counselling services on the college’s public website;
- Providing details of counselling services in the college staff handbook;
• Providing students and parents/carers with information regarding counselling services at induction; and
• Providing information regarding counselling services in the college newsletter on an ongoing basis.

Counselling Sessions
Counselling sessions will focus on being supportive. If appropriate, the counsellor may take a joint approach and include other staff.

Counselling sessions may be held during class time, in breaks or before or after college. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that appointments do not clash with assessments.

Teachers, Year Co-ordinators, Heads of School, parents and students may refer to the School Psychologists by making an appointment or communicating by email or phone.

Informal Consent
Prior to providing services, the PLC School Psychologists will inform clients about the nature, purpose and potential consequences of the interaction, the limits to confidentiality and right of access to files.

In the case of primary aged children, informed consent is obtained from a parent or legal guardian. However, at a certain point, a young person can be judged to be able to independently seek psychological support and, therefore, provide informed consent in his or her own right.

It is the responsibility of the School Counsellor to determine whether a young person possesses the ability to give informed consent for counselling services.

Parents/Carers
Parents/carers may be involved with the student’s counselling from the initial stages unless the student has voluntarily approached the Psychologist.

The Psychologist is not required to seek the consent of both parents either in families where parents are together or separated.

Parents/carers may seek advice from the Psychologist about their child’s progress and education options, including access to special education services and information about assistance from other agencies.

Referrals to External Specialists
Occasionally referrals will be made by the Psychologist to external professionals such as paediatricians, psychiatrists or speech pathologists. This may be the case depending on the nature of the required intervention or the degree of involvement required.

Referrals to specialists outside the college will be discussed with the student and their parents/carers, and the rationale for this will be explained.

A list of suitable practitioners will be given to the student or parent/carer. Psychologists will facilitate referrals upon request and may, after receiving written consent from the parent/guardian receive reports from the external practitioner, with permission from parent/carer.

Confidentiality
The School Psychologists maintain client confidentiality when collecting, recording, storing, disseminating, and disposing of information. However, a School Psychologist cannot keep confidential any information that reveals a risk of harm to the student or to any other person.
Involvement of Other college Staff

Where necessary and appropriate, the Psychologist may discuss the student’s circumstances with the student’s teachers, having regard to confidentiality.

Teachers are encouraged to discuss concerns they may have, regarding individual students in their class who are attending counselling.

Psychologists will report to the relevant Head of School regularly to provide general feedback on counselling services within the college and specifically on individual matters on an as needed basis.

Records

Appropriate records must be maintained 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.

Similarly, meetings and/or telephone conversations regarding the student with parents, staff and external specialists must also be recorded.

All records written by the Psychologist remain the property of the college.

Staff Responsibility

All staff are responsible to:

- Make themselves familiar with the college’s counselling services;
- Bring to the attention of the Psychologist any specific issues of concern relating to students under their care;
- Encourage students to see the college Psychologist where they feel the student would benefit from these services; and
- Follow the guidelines as set out in this policy.

Implementation

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- Staff training in identifying vulnerable students and effective referral processes;
- Student and parent/carer 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;
- Effective record keeping procedures; and
- Initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

Related Policies

Alcohol (Student Use of) Policy
Assault (Student against Student) Policy
Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy
Child Protection Policy
Child Protection – Mandatory Reporting of Sexual Abuse Policy
Code of Behaviour (Students)
Crisis Management (Traumatic Events) Policy
Discipline (Student) Policy
Drugs - Illicit (Student Use of) Policy
Eating Disorders Policy
Pastoral Care Policy
Self Harming Behaviours Policy