

How you as parents can help the school

- **Keep** the school informed of important changes that are affecting your child and your family that may impact upon your child at school and upon the school's interactions with staff & other students.
- **Provide** the school with relevant information pertaining to hospital admissions and presentations for serious mental health issues.
- **Work** collaboratively with the school to ensure proper management and care of your child within the limits of the school environment.
- **Understand** that the school counsellor is a mandatory reporter and must notify Family and Community Services of serious concerns.
- **Providing** the school with any relevant reports that may be helpful in assisting the school to manage & support students with serious mental health issues.
- **Understand** that school counsellors are generally social workers or psychologists who specialise in adolescent mental health & offer a professional service in line with both the NSW Education Act (1990) and the federal registration requirements of their professional associations.

Who can refer to the school counsellor?

Requests to see the school counsellor can be made by:

- a student
- a parent
- a staff member
- an external provider

Useful Contacts

Contact the school counsellor for local service providers.

Family Referral Service: 1800 066 757

Catholic Care:
www.catholiccare.org/families

Family Court of Australia:
www.familycourt.gov.au

Unifam Counselling & Mediation:
www.unifamcounselling.org

Beyond Blue :
<https://www.beyondblue.org.au>

CYMS—Child & Young Persons Mental Health Unit, attached to your local hospital.

Secondary School Counsellors

Guide for Parents



Supporting our students and our families

The Catholic Schools Office provides a school counselling service to all systemic Catholic schools within the diocese. The counsellors are a key part of our whole school pastoral care and wellbeing approach. Counsellors work with students, families and school staff to assist in the emotional and psychological wellbeing of students within the school community.

As a Catholic community our starting point is the understanding that each of us is made in God's image and our deep respect for the innate dignity and uniqueness of each and every person. A Catholic school community immersed in the Gospel of Jesus and filled with his Spirit is committed to the values of compassion, tolerance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

We affirm the rights of all members of the school community to *feel safe* and to *be safe and supported* at school.

The ways in which people interact with each other in the daily life of the school significantly affects each person's sense of well-being, identity and self-worth and contributes to the culture of the community. Everyone in the school community has a responsibility to foster quality interpersonal relationships amongst teachers, students, parents, support staff, priests and parish communities.

The place of parents as prime educators of their children is respected and affirmed. The school's prime concern is always to *act in the best interests of your child*. Feeling safe and supported at school is essential for student wellbeing and a pre-requisite for effective learning.

What the school counsellor can do

- **Undertake** mental health assessments.
- **Provide** counselling & support for students in the form of individual or targeted support/group work.
- **Assist** with the transition or re-entry of students back to school following serious absenteeism for mental health reasons or following mental health admissions.
- **Support** to schools in the management of critical incidents.
- **Referral** to other community based mental health agencies or specialists.
- **Liaison** with parents about a student's mental health in situations where the safety & wellbeing of a young person is of serious concern.
- **Consultation** with staff for the purposes of supporting & managing your child at school.
- **Advocacy** for young people.
- **Contribute** to the professional learning of staff in relation to the mental health & wellbeing of students.

The school counsellor cannot/may not:

- **Act** as the primary treating clinician for students with serious mental health issues or diagnosis. It is an expectation that these students are linked with an external professional who can liaise with the school counsellor to ensure proper management at school.
- **Engage** in the provision of specialist clinical counselling in areas outside their expertise. (eg. sexual assault counselling).
- **Act** as a disciplinarian of students.
- **Become** involved in family law matters or the interpretation or enforcement of court orders. If you disagree about an important decision about your child's education you need to seek help from the court.
- **Engage** in family therapy.
- **Respond** to requests that breach principles of privacy & confidentiality.
- **Offer** counselling in situations where a conflict of interest exists (eg. the concerns or aims of two different parties are incompatible).
- **Transport** a student to or from home and school.
- **Offer** individual counselling to students outside of school hours.