



VIC-EDU-P-012 Counselling Services Policy

1. Policy Scope

MacKillop Education is committed to supporting and enhancing the wellbeing of young people. MacKillop Education provides all our children and young people with access to counselling provided by trained counsellors.

2. Policy Outline

Context

Our values of respect, hope, justice, compassion, and collaboration inform the quality of relationships we establish and all that we do to ensure our learning community is a place of welcome and safety. MacKillop Education celebrates diversity, and we are committed to inclusion, so that every student, regardless of race, religion, culture, gender identity or personal circumstances, including barriers to learning, can access education and experience success.

Our model, Reframing Learning and Teaching Environments (ReLATE), supports our trauma-informed practice and highlights the critical partnership between students, guardians, and staff, as we work together, to enhance the learning outcomes for every child.

Purpose

This policy outlines the MacKillop Education referral process and the confidentiality requirements that are relevant, when a child or young person accesses counselling.

Policy Statement

MacKillop Education provides students with access to counselling, as required. However, when staff or guardians make a referral, they should keep in mind that effective counselling requires the co-operation and consent of the young person.

Ordinarily the nature of discussion between a young person and a counsellor is confidential, including the fact that the young person has made use of the counselling service. The exceptions to this are where there is a legal requirement to disclose information, including:

- informing school staff when a student is attending an appointment, in line with duty of care requirements,
- the protocols around mandatory reporting of abuse of a child, and/or
- if there exists a reasonable concern that information needs to be disclosed to protect the safety of the young person or others.

Any family or staff member who wishes to know whether a young person has used the counselling service, or the nature of counselling discussions will be denied that information unless the exceptions to confidentiality listed above apply, or the young person gives permission. There may be occasions when the counsellor seeks to involve family or others in the counselling process. This will only be done if the young person provides permission.

Principles

MacKillop Education is committed to the care safety and wellbeing of all students.

Definitions

A Student Counsellor is a qualified person with responsibility for:

- The provision of individual and group counselling services.
- Preliminary identification of young people in need of special help in coping with life issues.
- Provision of accurate information for staff and young people regarding services and programs.
- Assisting young people to develop appropriate strategies to help cope with their life issues.
- Providing young people, guardians of young people and families referral to external agencies.
- Liaising with staff when they are working with young people with a special need.
- Promotion of counselling as an effective strategy for young people coping with personal issues.
- Assisting in the development and implementation of school policies and programs that promote the emotional wellbeing and mental health of young people.

3. Procedure

Referral to a student counsellor can be made by the young person, or a parent, guardian or carer (“guardian”), or a staff member that is concerned for the wellbeing of the young person.

4. Responsibilities

Compliance, monitoring and review

MacKillop Education will ensure child safety requirements are observed, and will:

- Identify an appropriate meeting room for these sessions
- Establish a clearly defined role for the counsellor in the school community
- Provide guidelines on confidentiality and referral to counsellor procedures
- Provide staff with information on self-disclosure and confidentiality
- Establish a Mandatory Reporting referral protocol, including Advisory Group
- Develop procedures for interviews conducted by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH).

Staff will:

Monitor changes in student behaviour

- Be aware of the limits of their pastoral role and refer young people as appropriate to the key teacher and/or school counsellor
- Respect a young person's right to confidentiality, and only pass on information to another staff member who needs to know, in a professional manner
- Adhere to the guidelines for confidentiality of information pertaining to young people and to student attendance at counselling
- Minimise use of self-disclosure and be mindful of inappropriate self-disclosure
- Report any young person who discloses incidents of self-harm to the key teacher and/or the school counsellor
- Report to Child Protection when they have formed a belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child under 17 years of age needs protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

Young person and parents/carers will:

- Maintain the right of the young person to access confidential counselling support.

5. Related legislation, policy, guidelines and resources

- Guidelines and Procedures for Mandatory Reporting of Child Physical and Sexual Abuse (MACS 2021)
- Victorian Child FIRST information and protocols
- The Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM), which is established under Part 11 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008.
- Privacy Policy MACS 2021

- Ethical standards as established by the Australian Psychologists Association (APA), Australia (PACFA) or similar bodies.

6. Approval and Review Details

Approval and Review	Details
Approval Authority	Executive Principal
Approval Date	17 August 2022
Recommended to Approval Authority by	MacKillop Education Leadership Team
Next Review Date	1 August 2025
Version	1