



Counselling Services (Student) Policy

Counselling Services

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

Thomas Carr College provides professional counselling services to assist students and their families deal with issues that may hinder their development.

Thomas Carr College's Policy

Thomas Carr 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 services be made available to all students at no additional charge;
- The college's counselling services be highly visible to students and the general college community;
- The college's counselling services are easy to access; and
- College Counselling services are free for all students.

Counselling Services - Contact Details (During Normal Office Hours)

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

The College Counselling Services are only available during normal school hours. These services can be accessed by simply:

- Completing a *Teacher Referral to College Counsellor Form*, (then selecting 'View Forms' Student Services). Teachers are encouraged to consult the *Student Wellbeing and Counselling Procedures - A Guide for Teachers* for further information about when a referral to the Student Counsellors is indicated.
- Phoning or speaking to the Student Wellbeing Team leader on 8734 2403 (where the referral is being made by a parent or a student);
- Emailing the Student Wellbeing Team Leader (where an email is sent outside of college hours, the Student Wellbeing Team Leader will respond as soon as is possible within school hours).

Counselling Services - Contact Details (After Hours)

If a parent or student is requiring critical assistance after hours, then there are a range of support services available who will be able to assist. Some of these include:

- A General Practitioner;
- SuicideLine Victoria - 1300 651 251;
- Lifeline - 13 11 14;
- YODAA (Youth Drug and Alcohol Service) - 1800 458 685 available 9am - 8pm weekdays;
- Orygen Youth Health (Emergency Triage for Young People over 15 years) - 1800 888 320;
- Kids Helpline - 1800 551 800;
- CAMHS Psychiatric Triage (Under 15 years) - 1800 445 511.

Visibility of Counselling Services

The availability of the college's counselling services are highly visible to students and to the wider college community. Initiatives to ensure the visibility 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 contact details for counselling services on the college's SIMON portal and on parents' PAM portal;
- 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 and offering solution focussed outcomes. 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 school. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that appointments do not clash with assessments.

Parents/Carers

Student Counselling is part of a range of services offered to all students at the college. Where possible and appropriate, parents/carers are encouraged to be part of the counselling process from the initial stages.

Where a student is under the age of 16 years and parents do not give consent for them to have counselling at the college, parents should notify the College of their wishes in writing. Letters may be addressed to the Director of Student Services.

Parents/carers may seek advice from the counsellor 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 counsellor 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. Counsellors will facilitate referrals upon request and will be entitled to receive reports from the external practitioner.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality of information disclosed during a counselling session must be maintained unless the student provides consent or the situation falls into a privacy exemption category (for example, where a student discloses that they are at risk to self or others).

Discussions held between the student, their parents/carers and the counsellor are confidential to the extent that information will only be made accessible to other college staff on an as needed basis.

Confidentiality practices will be explained to students prior to counselling.

Involvement of Other College Staff

Where necessary and appropriate, the counsellor 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.

Counsellors will report to the Core Wellbeing Committee 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 counsellor remain the property of the college. Access to counselling records will only be provided where appropriate legal requirements are met.

Staff Responsibility

All staff are responsible to:

- Make themselves familiar with the college's counselling services;
- Bring to the attention of the counsellor any specific issues of concern relating to students under their care;
- Encourage students to see the college counsellor 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.

Discipline for Breach of Policy

Where a staff member breaches this policy Thomas Carr College may take disciplinary action.

Related Policies

Alcohol (Student Use of) Policy

Assault (Student against Student) Policy

Positive Relations Policy

Code of Behaviour (Students)

Child Protection Program

Critical Incident (Traumatic Events) Policy

Discipline (Student) Policy

Drugs - Illicit (Student Use of) Policy

Eating Disorders Policy

Pastoral Care Policy

Self Harming Behaviours Policy

Policy status: New

Key Stakeholders: College staff, students and parents

Endorsement Body: College Executive

Ratification Body: College Board Policy

Author: Core Wellbeing Team

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Date of Scheduled Review: 2020

The content of this policy can be changed at the College Board's discretion at any time without notification.