

## **POLICY ON EXTERNAL WORKERS: WELFARE/COUNSELLING/MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.**

At Shepparton ACE Secondary College we take the health, welfare and mental health of our students seriously. We also understand the vulnerability of students who may be experiencing a range of emotional problems and endeavour to provide relevant and empathic support services on site in a whole of school approach.

To facilitate this, we acknowledge that working collaboratively with external agencies is in the best interest of our students, families and wider support networks. In order to ensure that external services and agencies are providing safe and relevant on-site support the school has developed this policy to reflect this outcome.

As a result, the school reserves the right and has a responsibility to ensure that any external service requesting to enter the school meets the school's standards and complies with professional codes of conduct.

The school recognises the benefits of collaboration, but the school reserves the right to allow or deny access to the school and students on a case by case basis as outlined in this policy. The school also has a responsibility to ensure that those practicing on site are qualified, professional and comply with the school's child safe policies and the policies outlined in this policy document.

The school uses a wide range of support and counselling modalities and approaches including the following:

- strengths based approaches
- narrative therapy
- critical and radical social work approaches
- feminist counselling theory
- resilience approaches
- reality and choice therapy
- trauma informed therapy
- behavioural approaches and interventions
- anti-discrimination and racism practices
- non-labelling practices
- taking responsibility for actions
- mediation
- cognitive behavioural approaches
- validation and witnessing

The school welfare team recognises that no single theoretical approach is of sole use with any one individual, but that a range of approaches are far more likely to elicit critical and reflective thinking and the application of theory to the benefit of the school's students.

### **Booking a Meeting Room**

- Appointments are to be made from 10:15pm onwards, and for 45min only.
- Appointments must not interfere with student breaks which occur on the hour for 15min.
- No appointments are to be made between 12:00pm – 1:15pm.
- Appointments may resume from 1:15pm until the end of the school day at 3:00pm, no appointments are to run past 3:00pm unless an exemption has been granted by the school.

- Any request to book a meeting space must be approved by the school social worker and the school principal.
- The use of the meeting space must be kept to a consistent and regular time (unless there is illness or unforeseen circumstances etc.).
- The meeting space will be left clean and orderly, any materials brought in will be taken with the worker and the white board will be left clean.
- School staff will not be responsible for managing these appointments with individual workers.
- School staff always have priority use of this space and all other school resources, every effort will be made to inform external workers if the room becomes unavailable.
- Any cold calls from counselling services requesting immediate access to the student during class times will not be accepted.

### **Child Safety**

- Before any external service begins onsite, the school must be provided with a consent to service document signed by the student, the external agencies worker and the relevant care provider who has responsibility for the student (this is the responsibility of the service requesting to work on site).
- This document must outline what service is being provided to the student in clear and easy to understand language and must have a projected end date for the service provision.
- The school must also be provided with the complaints policy of the external service provider before any work is to begin.
- If any external service places a student at risk of harm by not informing the school of any pre-existing safety plans that should be in place across environments, then the school make take legal action against the organisation that has, through this omission, placed the student (and/or staff, the community, and the wider student cohort) at risk of harm.
- External workers on school property are only to engage with his/her client and not attempt to assist or inquire about any other student (whether known or unknown) while at the school.
- If this engagement occurs, the worker will not be accepted back onto school property and all service provision will be cancelled until a meeting can be held with the school principal and the service provider.

If the information requested above is not provided or is not deemed sufficient or relevant, then the school reserves the right to disallow the request for service provision on site.

### **Students Leaving School Grounds with External Workers**

- No external worker is to take a student off the school grounds without prior written consent from a parent, caregiver or protection worker that details why the student is leaving, with whom, what day/s and time/s and when the student is expected to return (in urgent situations this consent may be provided verbally over the phone by a parent, caregiver or protection worker).
- This consent to service document must include contact details for the worker, the worker must also sign the student in and out at the front office.
- The worker must provide a contact number in case of emergency and the phone number of any team leader or supervisor or any other need the school has to contact the student.

- If a student is removed from school without these steps being complied with, the school will consider this breach as a serious child safety and duty of care concern and the school will take appropriate action.
- Appropriate action may include any of the following:
  - a complaint to the agency involved,
  - a complaint to DHHS Child Protection,
  - a report provided to the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner
  - or, in serious instances, police action.

### The Schools Rights & Responsibilities

- The school reserves the right to cancel any external workers sessions/meetings at any time and for any reason.
- If the school's counsellor is actively providing welfare services and support to the student, the school reserves the right to require external services to provide their service outside of school hours, off site.
- If the school's counsellor is providing welfare, mental health and counselling support in an ongoing manner the school expects external services to respect the therapeutic relationships that may have been developed, the approaches taken (including theoretical applications and approaches) and to not inadvertently disrupt or undermine this school based work.
- The school's counsellor and welfare staff will make appropriate referrals when required.
- If it is found that a student is receiving counselling/mental health support outside the school, the school's counsellor will not engage in formal counselling of this student unless a hand over is requested by the student and/or his/her family.
- The school reserves the right to not apply any school-based support plans developed by external workers or care teams that have been developed without any school input and that has not had the approval from the school principal.
- School based support plans that have not had school input, have not been sought by the school and do not reflect the student's abilities or needs will not be accepted.
- For students who are reengaging with school or who are enrolled in year twelve on a three day a week timetable, the school requests that any external service/agency undertake their work on the two days the student is not expected at school.

### Links to other policies

- Child Safe Policy
- Supervision of Students On and Off Site Policy Statement
- Duty of Care Policy and Procedures

Date	Version No.	Change	Author(s)
July 2020	1.0	Issued	Joel Hoffman Irene James
May 2021	1.1	Update address	Irene James
November 2021	1.2	Revised – updated meeting room	Joel Hoffman
March 2024	1.3	Changed Fonts	Kylie Richards