St Francis Xavier College
Berwick, Officer and Beaconsfield

Procedure for

College Student Counselling Service

St Francis Xavier College procedures are designed to enable the College to enact the policies of the Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited (DOSCEL).

All College Procedures intentionally promote a child safe culture which prioritises the safety and wellbeing for all students.

Contents

Purpose **1**

Context **1**

Scope **1**

Procedure **1**

1. Prevention 1

2. Responding 2

2.1 Rationale for response 2

2.2 Access and duration of counselling 2

2.3 Referral Pathways 2

2.4 Consent 3

2.5 Record Keeping 4

Responsibilities **4**

College Counsellors Responsibilities 4

All Staff Responsibilities 4

Compliance **4**

Discipline for Breach of Procedures 4

Related legislation 4

Related DOSCEL Policy 5

Related College Procedures 5
Related 5
Further Information 6
Record of Review 6
College Counselling Service Consent Form 7

Purpose

These guidelines outline how the St Francis Xavier College Counselling Service operates and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the College Counsellors and the College in relation to:

- referral pathways,
- services provided,
- information collected and recorded,
- the sharing of information and
- the involvement of other stakeholders (e.g. parents, staff and external professionals).

Context

St Francis Xavier College prides itself on equipping young people to be ready to play their part in the world. The College offers a pathway suited to each student which promotes academic growth and spiritual, social, emotional, and physical wellbeing. The College Counselling Service plays a significant role in realizing this educational vision, by providing a range of services to support the students at the College.

Scope

The procedure applies to all staff and students.

Procedure

1. Prevention

The St Francis Xavier College Counselling Service aims to provide counselling expertise to support students, through a range of proactive and responsive interventions.

It is the College Counselling Service's aim to work proactively with all stakeholders at the College (e.g. Leadership, staff members, families and individual students).

This proactive work could include:

- Supporting a range of school-based activities (e.g. camps, reflection days, sports days).
- Consultation with stakeholders such as parents/guardians, staff, and external healthcare professionals.
- Designing, delivering, and evaluating whole school wellbeing programs.
- Designing, delivering, and evaluating small group targeted programs.
- Delivering a range of tailored mental health programs for both students and staff (e.g. Youth Mental Health First Aid).
- Supporting the College to respond to and manage critical incidents and serious matters concerning the school community.
- Contributing to the College's policies, procedures, and practices

2. Responding

2.1 Rationale for response

Adolescence is a time of marked physical, psychological, and cognitive growth. During this developmental phase students may experience a wide range of behavioural, emotional, and social issues that, if left unaddressed, may jeopardise their wellbeing and learning. Examples include low mood, anxiety, interpersonal difficulties, bullying, traumatic events, alcohol and substance abuse and identity issues. St Francis Xavier College provides a professional student counselling service to assist students and their families to navigate issues such as these.

It is the College's intention that:

- Professional counselling services be made available at no additional charge.
- The counselling spaces are confidential and set away from classrooms, staff offices and reception.
- Information about the college counselling services be readily available, and regularly advertised, to students and the general college community.
- The college counselling services are offered on a voluntary basis and are easy to access and use.

2.2 Access and duration of counselling

The College Counselling Service is a time-limited one that operates during school terms from 8.00am through to 4.00pm. Counsellors generally will not check or respond to communications after hours. After hours counsellor will ensure that their Out of Office email reply is activated, providing students and parents / guardians with information about where they can seek mental health crisis supports.

All students at the College have free access to the services provided by the College Counselling Service. The number of sessions provided to each student will depend on a range of factors including engagement level, demand for the service and the nature of the presenting issue.

If the presenting issue is clinically complex and ongoing in nature, or requires specialist expertise (e.g. eating disorders, selective mutism), then a referral to an external professional will be recommended. The College Counsellors will exercise their professional judgement when referring to an external provider, discussing their observations and referral suggestions with parents / guardians.

2.3 Referral Pathways

There are several avenues of referral for a student to the College Counselling Service. It is a requirement that all students referred to the counselling service have indicated their willingness to engage in counselling services.

The only time students will be required to engage with the Counselling Service is when they are deemed 'at immediate risk'. This risk could include, but is not limited to, engaging in self-harm at school, expression of suicidal thinking or behaviours, or displaying extreme and uncontained emotional distress.

Except in the case of 'at immediate risk' concerns (as defined above), all students must be referred to the college counselling service following correct processes:

Staff

- Staff should discuss their recommendation of a counselling referral with the student.
- Once a student has consented to engaging with the college counselling service, the staff member will complete the 'Student Counselling Referral Form' (General channel, TEAMS).

Students

- Students can email makeappointment@sfx.vic.edu.au
- Can ask their Head of House or Care Group Teacher to complete a referral form.

Parents

- Parents can contact a member of the Counselling Campus Team that corresponds to their child's campus.
- Contact their child's Head of House or Care Group Teacher, who will then complete a referral form.
- Can email makeappointment@sfx.vic.edu.au

Please note: A referral can only be accepted from a parent with the understanding that the child will be informed that the referral came from their parent.

2.4 Consent

It is not a blanket requirement that counsellors obtain consent from parents/guardians before a student accesses support from the counselling service. Instead, counsellors will determine if students have the maturity and ability to give their own informed consent for counselling support.

When a student is deemed not capable of giving consent, parental consent will be sought. When working with younger students (Year 7 and 8) counsellors will aim, with consent, to involve parents in their work with the young person.

Counsellors will provide clear and simple information to young people about:

- The voluntary and time-limited nature of the service.
- Confidentiality and the sharing of information within, and beyond the school.
- The management of personal information including record keeping and storage.

Students will be made aware that the confidentiality of information is not absolute. In the following circumstances confidentiality will be broken by the counsellor:

- The student gives permission for the counsellor to share information with other people (e.g., parents, teachers, outside professionals such as psychologists or doctors).
- The counsellor thinks that the student's, or someone else's life, safety or health might be at serious risk if they do not tell someone.
- If the counsellor's notes are subpoenaed in a court of law
- If information is requested by Police/DFFH/Child Protection

If the counsellor needs to pass on information to someone else, they will attempt to explain how this will happen before information is passed on.

2.5 Record Keeping

Appropriate records will be maintained in accordance with professional standards (Code of Ethics and Practice (theaca.net.au), 20aps-ethical-guidelines-record-keeping-p163-170.pdf (psychology.org.au).

These records include demographic and session information, assessment information, and any third-party information relevant to the service provided.

Records are secured electronically, and files will be kept indefinitely in line with Child Safety and Wellbeing Record Keeping Policies and Procedures. Prior to commencing counselling, students must be made aware of the way their personal information will be managed.

Responsibilities

College Counsellors Responsibilities

All college counsellors are responsible to make themselves familiar with the procedures of the college counselling services; and adhere to the operational guidelines of the College Counselling Team Operational Manual.

All Staff Responsibilities

All staff are responsible to:

- Make themselves familiar with the procedures of the college counselling services.
- Bring to the attention of the counselling team any specific issues of concern in relation to students under their care.
- Encourage students to see the college counsellor where they feel the student would benefit from these services.

Compliance

This procedure is implemented by:

- staff training and professional development opportunities
- communication to the College community
- effective maintenance of student records
- effective incident notification procedures
- monitoring the effectiveness of the procedure
- reviewing and evaluating the procedure

Discipline for Breach of Procedures

Where a staff member breaches these procedures St Francis Xavier College may take disciplinary action.

Related legislation

- Privacy and Data Protection Act Vic 2014

- Health Records Act Vic 2001
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act, 2006
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act, 2005 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act, 1992 (Cth)
- Disability Standards for Education, 2005 (Cth)
- Education and Training Reform Act, 2006 (Vic)
- Equal Opportunity Act, 2010 (Vic)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act, 2004 (Vic)

Related DOSCEL Policy

- Student Duty of Care Policy
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Student Pastoral Care Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Cyber Safety Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Critical Incident Management Policy

Related College Procedures

- Procedure for Suicide Risk Management
- Procedure for Self-Harm Risk Management
- Child Safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- Student Duty of Care Procedure
- Privacy Procedure
- Digital Learning Policy
- Digital Learning Procedure
- Wellbeing Guidelines
- Restraint and Seclusion Procedure
- Mobile Phone Procedures
- Alcohol and Other Drugs Procedure
- Out of Home Care Procedure

Related

- College Counselling Service Consent Form
- College Case Notes Style Guide
- Student Support Plan Templates
- Suicide Risk Assessment Templates

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from: Deputy Principal Wellbeing

Status of Procedure	
College Leader Responsible	Deputy Principal Wellbeing
Implementation Date / Last Reviewed	October 2025
Review Date [Commonly 1 – 2 Years]	2 years – October 2027
Local Governing Authority Approval	College Executive Team

Record of Review

Details of Amendments	By Whom	Date
▪ Addition of Compliance section ▪ Addition of appendix (Consent form) ▪ Minor changes to formatting and content throughout document	Deputy Principal Wellbeing	October 2023
No changes needed	Deputy Principal Wellbeing Director of Counselling and Pastoral Care	December 2025

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COLLEGE COUNSELLING SERVICE
CONSENT FORM

St Francis Xavier College provides a counselling service for all students. This service is provided by qualified counsellors employed by the College. Counsellors are very knowledgeable in human behaviour having studied things like the brain, human development and the ways people think, feel and act. Counsellors may be able to assist with a range of issues that impact young people.

It is important that **informed consent** is received from students before beginning school counselling. This means that students understand and agree to the following conditions:

(Please tick each checkbox to indicate your understanding of each condition)

1. Voluntary

Counselling is your choice – you get to decide

☐ Counselling is voluntary and students can stop counselling at any time.

2. Nature of Service

Counselling is at school during school time

☐ The St Francis Xavier College Counselling Service is a time-limited one that operates during school terms from 8.00am through to 4.00pm. Counsellors generally will not check or respond to communications after hours.

3. Collection of Information

Counsellors take notes as part of helping you

☐ Information will be collected by the counsellor including personal information (e.g. name, age, year level, family structure) and what happens in counselling sessions. This aims to make sure that the work in counselling is helpful and relevant.

4. Storage of Information

Notes about you are stored safely

☐ These information records belong to the College (and therefore the Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited – DOSCEL) and are stored in secure electronic files. These files can only be accessed by counsellors within the St Francis Xavier College Counselling Team.

5. Sharing of Information

Counsellors may need to tell someone your information to get more help for your or someone else if needed

☐ All information shared in counselling sessions will be held in the **strictest of confidence**, except if:

- You give permission for the counsellor to share information with other people (e.g., parents, teachers, outside professionals such as psychologists or doctors).
- the counsellor's notes are subpoenaed in a court of law
- Information is requested by Police/DFFH/Child Protection (e.g. St. Francis Xavier College counsellors are mandatory reporters which means they must report Child Safety concerns)
- The counsellor thinks that yours or someone else's life, safety or health might be at serious risk if they do not tell someone.
  Examples of this may be:
  - Harm to self
  - Significant harm from or towards others
  - Risk of homelessness
  - Misuse of alcohol or other drugs
  - Age of consent breaches
  - Pregnancy

If the counsellor needs to pass on information to someone else, they will attempt to explain how this will happen before information is passed on.

If you have any questions about this form, please ask the counsellor before signing below.

I, _____, agree to receive counselling support at St Francis Xavier College under the conditions outlined above.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Counsellor Name:_____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____