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Counselling Services (Student)

Counselling Services

Within a school 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.

Malek Fahd Islamic School provides professional counselling services to assist students and their families deal with issues that may hinder their development.

Malek Fahd Islamic School's Policy

Malek Fahd Islamic School 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 school's counselling services be highly visible to students and the general school community; and
- The school's counselling services are easy to access.

Counselling Services - Contact Details

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

These services can be accessed by all students simply by contacting:

Ms Khallaf Assaf- available between 8am-4pm/ 5 days a week.

Email: assaf@mfis.nsw.edu.au

School counselling services are free for all students.

Visibility of Counselling Services

The availability of the school's counselling services are highly visible to students and to the wider school community. Initiatives to ensure the visibility of the school's counselling services include:

The counsellor is located in the High School library, and students are free to walk into her office whenever there is a need. She also spends two days a week in the Primary Campus.

The counsellor's services are made clear in year 7 welcome packs, which students receive on open day. Details are also available in the welfare and discipline policies.

- Training all staff as to the nature and availability of the services;
- Providing contact details for counselling services on the school's public website;
- Providing contact details for counselling services on the school's student/parent portal;
- Providing details of counselling services in the school staff handbook;
- Providing details of counselling services in the school student diary;
- Placing posters strategically around the school;
- Providing students and parents/carers with information regarding counselling services at induction; and
- Providing information regarding counselling services in the school newsletter on an ongoing basis.

Counselling Sessions

Counselling sessions will focus on being supportive and offering problem centred 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

Parents/carers will be involved with the student's counselling from the initial stages unless the student has voluntarily approached the counsellor.

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

Primary School Referrals

For students in Primary school, a parent or teacher can refer a student to see the school counsellor, however parental consent must be provided before a primary child is seen.

Teachers and parents must complete a Teacher Referral Form or Parent Referral Form. A signed consent form must be attached with the Referral form prior to counselling or commencement of a classroom observation.

High School Referrals

The person making the referral (teacher or parent) must complete either a teacher referral form or a parent referral form. High school students are also able to refer themselves and seek an appointment with the counsellor. Parental consent is not a requirement for secondary students.

Students who attend counselling will also be asked to sign a consent form outlining the conditions of counselling and confidentiality.

The high school student will be informed that to facilitate good communication between the school and home, and to enhance the effectiveness of the counsellor's role, it is usually in the student's best that parents be informed. It is the responsibility of either the teacher or the counsellor to seek the involvement of parents. The student will be informed of this practice.

A copy of the Counselling Parent Referral Form can be viewed [here](#).

A copy of the Counselling Teacher Referral Form can be viewed [here](#).

A copy of the Parent Consent Form for Counselling can be viewed [here](#).

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 school 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

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 school staff on an as needed basis.

Confidentiality practices will be explained to students prior to counselling. The only person entitled access to a student's counselling records is the school counsellor.

Those records are maintained in a locked cabinet, separate to the students' general files. If the Principal has a concern, he or she may request information relevant to that concern, rather than general access to the file.

Students will be informed that discussions with the counsellor are confidential except in circumstances such as when:

- There is a concern that the student will cause himself or herself harm;
- There is a concern that the student will cause harm to another person;
- The student discloses criminal activity such that it may impact on the welfare of the student or others at the school;
- The student discloses that he/she has suffered harm or the counsellor reasonably suspects that the student has suffered harm, sexual abuse or neglect; and
- Counselling records are subpoenaed and are required for evidence in court.

Involvement of Other School 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 Principal regularly to provide general feedback on counselling services within the school and specifically on individual matters on an as needed basis.

This depends on who has referred the student, and the nature of what was disclosed by the student. Generally, the Principal will be informed.

Teachers will only be informed on a 'need to know basis' so as to maintain confidentiality. Parents may be informed, depending on the nature of the issue and the counsellor's obligation to report. Of course, Police and FACS are notified if need be.

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 school. Access to counselling records will only be provided where appropriate legal requirements are met.

Counsellor's Responsibility

- Providing a confidential counselling service for students, their parents and staff as required, while adhering to mandatory notification principles;
- Providing advice on appropriate referral options for students identified as needing additional testing or support;
- Supporting students in crisis;
- Collaborating with the school Chaplain regarding the counselling of individuals; and
- Using professional judgment in communicating relevant information and issues to Principal, staff and parents.

Workers' Responsibility

All workers are responsible to:

- Make themselves familiar with the school'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 school 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 school 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 Malek Fahd Islamic School may take disciplinary action.

Related Policies

Alcohol (Student Use of) Policy
Assault (Student against Student) Policy
Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy
Child Protection Policy (NSW)
Child Protection - Mandatory Reporting of Abuse & Neglect Policy (NSW)
Critical Incident (Traumatic Events) Policy
Drugs - Illicit (Student Use of) Policy
Eating Disorders Policy
Pastoral Care Policy
Self Harming Behaviours Policy