

College Counselling Service

Our College Psychologist applies their psychological and educational expertise to support students to achieve academic success, psychological health, and social and emotional wellbeing. Their primary purpose is to assist the College to address barriers to learning for children and young people and to improve their educational achievement.

A significant role of our psychologist is to consult with teachers, parents or carers as deemed appropriate. They are proactive in the practises designed to create and maintain an effective and supportive learning environment.

Ethical Obligations

The College Psychologist's professional conduct is guided by the *APS Code of Ethics (2007)*. This promotes safe, ethical and professional psychological practice and is designed to protect both the integrity of the profession and the rights and safety of our students.

Prior to providing consultation, they will inform the student of the limits to confidentiality, access to confidential information and with whom information will be shared:

- Clear and simple information for students about their role
- Clear information about the relationship between themselves and other members of the college staff eg principal and teachers
- Limits of confidentiality
- Storage of psychological files at the college
- Information about who can access the file

Consultation will be provided to a young person without parent/carer consent as long as the young person is deemed to have the capacity to give informed consent. A young person is considered capable of giving informed consent when they have sufficient understanding and intelligence to fully comprehend what is proposed.

In the primary school setting, our psychologist will seek consent of the parent or carer before engaging in any psychological support to the student. However, if there is concern for the immediate safety or wellbeing of a student, our psychologist must act in the student's best interest.

Generally, if a secondary student self refers, the college is not obliged to disclose this to parents/carers. However, the student's consent to disclose to the parent/carer should be sought when it is deemed to be in the best interest of the student.

Not all information our psychologist obtains from a student can remain confidential. This is particularly true for information that reveals a risk of harm to the student or to any other person. Legal requests for information from a student's file are often made when there is a family dispute over child custody, or other situations which can result in the college psychologist's file being subpoenaed.

The college principal and psychologist will endeavour to comply with relevant privacy legislation, mandatory reporting requirement and duty of care. This policy will operate in accordance with the legal and ethical frameworks which apply to the provision of psychology services.

Students or their parents or carers may ask for access to their records. The complete record is not necessarily relevant to such requests. Our psychologist will provide records under privacy principles and give access in the manner requested by the individual, where reasonable and practicable.

Exceptions to access is governed by legislation. This includes situations where 'access would pose a serious threat to the life, health or safety of any individual, or to public health or public safety' and 'giving access would have an unreasonable impact on the privacy of other individuals.'

College Psychologist - Megan Schmitz (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday during term time)

Megan.Schmitz@mcdonald.nsw.edu.au

Tel 9752 0500

If there is an emergency, please dial: 000

Kids helpline: 1800 55 1800

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Mental Health Access Line: 1800 011 511

Parent Line: 1300 1300 52

Record Keeping

Files may include:

- Informed consent and privacy statement
- Action summary
- Authority to release information form
- Case closure form.

Assessments, session notes, correspondence, reports and treatment plans form the bulk of the file. Session notes can be subpoenaed as evidence and can be the subject of cross examination in court proceedings.

Records will be retained for a minimum of seven years after the minor has reached maturity – ie 18 years plus 7 years.

Files will be stored separately from all other college records/files. Alternatively, password protected student files may be stored electronically with access available only by the psychologist.