

## Making an appointment with a counsellor

School counsellors have teaching responsibilities, but devote time each day to counselling and providing support to individuals and groups of students. If you wish to discuss an issue you can go directly to the counsellor who will speak to you briefly before making an appointment at a time that suits you both. Small groups of students may also wish to make an appointment about an issue of concern to them all.

Parents/carers or teachers who are concerned about you can ask the counsellor to make an appointment with you. This may make it easier for you to seek support. However, it is up to you whether you use the appointment to do so or not.

## What to do if you are unhappy with the counselling service

If you feel dissatisfied with the counselling service at school it is important that you bring your concern to the attention of someone who can do something about the issue.

It is suggested that you follow grievance procedures, approaching the issue by choosing any of the following strategies:

- talk directly to the counsellor and see if you can overcome the problem together
- approach another trusted staff member in the school and ask them to speak to the counsellor, or principal, on your behalf
- speak directly to the principal
- write a note to the principal, marking it 'confidential'
- ask your parent/carer, or another trusted person, to speak to the counsellor, or principal, with you or on your behalf

The school principal is responsible for managing the school and looking after the wellbeing and safety of all members of the school community, so he/she is required to address your concern. Both you and the counsellor have the right to stop the counselling relationship at any time.

The counsellor may refer you to another person at school or to someone outside of the school. This referral will be made in a way that respects and protects your wellbeing and safety needs.

“The counselling service in schools provides help and support for you, your friends and the wider school community, to help you manage things that are happening in your life and to develop the skills and confidence to be able to do so more independently in the future”

School-based counsellors are qualified teachers with additional skills in promoting and supporting student learning and wellbeing. In this brochure they are referred to as counsellors.

The counselling service offers:

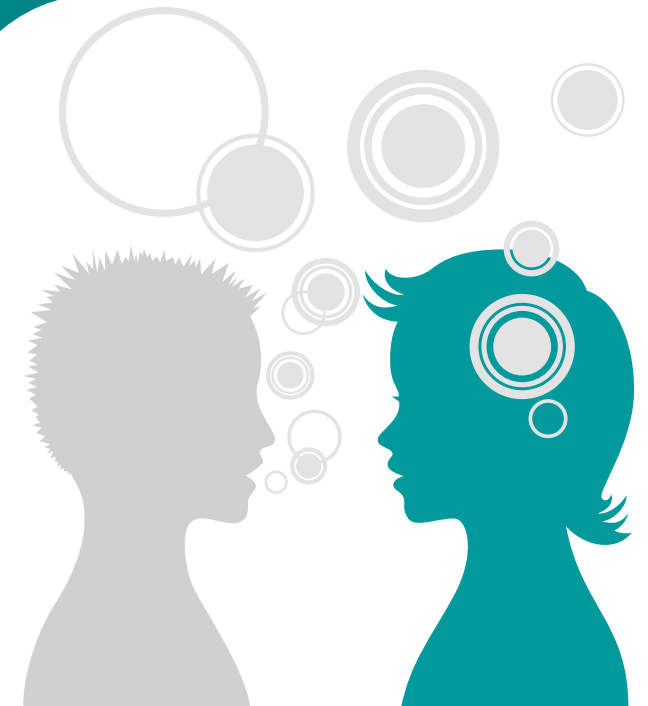
- help to manage relationships with family, teachers and peers
- support to manage issues of concern
- course and career guidance
- information about and referrals to other support agencies
- support to encourage attendance and learning at school

A common way counsellors can support you is by offering to talk with others on your behalf for example with teachers, friends or parents.

You will give permission for this to happen, decide with the counsellor whether or not you should be present and you will be able to check any written notes that you agree should be distributed to your teachers.

As well as offering a counselling service, counsellors perform other roles within the school such as, teaching classes, implementing school and behaviour management procedures and supervising students during break times.

# School-based Counselling Service



## Information for students

This brochure explains the counselling service at South Australian primary and secondary schools. It describes your responsibilities and rights as a student in the school counselling process.

## Parents may also find this information useful



Government of South Australia  
Department of Education and  
Children's Services

## Your responsibilities in the counselling process

Counselling is most effective when you form a trusting relationship with the counsellor. Resolving issues often means that you have to make some changes, so be prepared to work with the counsellor on different ways of thinking and behaving to achieve your goals.

When you use the counselling service it is important that you always keep scheduled appointments and follow through with the actions you agree to during the session.

## Involving your parents/carers

The support and understanding of your parents/carers may help to resolve an issue and increase your safety and wellbeing. So, the counsellor may ask you if you would like to involve them in the counselling process. The decision whether or not to involve your parents/carers is up to you, and your views will be respected.

If you have not given your consent, the counsellor may ask you again at a later time to check whether you have changed your mind and would now like your parent or carer to be involved.

Your parents/carers might also make an appointment to meet with the counsellor seeking support to manage issues that concern them as parents. They will be assisted by the counsellor in the same way as you are.

The information from their appointment will not be shared with you, nor will the information you have shared be given to them, without consent, unless it is necessary to prevent a serious threat the counsellor anticipates to your or others' safety and wellbeing.

(See **Confidentiality and Informed Consent** section)

## Referrals

If you are referred to another service provider it is important that you plan how you will meet this commitment. To do this you must arrange suitable transport and get the necessary permission to leave the school. The counsellor is able to support you to make these arrangements.

## Confidentiality & Informed Consent

It is the responsibility of counsellors to protect the confidential information you share with them during the counselling process. Sometimes, however, it may be necessary for the counsellor to share information with particular people to help you resolve complex problems.

Counsellors will share your confidential information when:

- you ask them to, or
- they ask for your **informed consent** and you give it.

Counsellors will only share your confidential information **without your consent** when:

- they are required to do so by law (see **Mandatory Notification Requirements**), or
- the counsellor believes it is necessary to help prevent a serious threat to your or others' safety or wellbeing.

(SA Information Sharing Guidelines)

## Mandatory Notification Requirements

It is a legal requirement that information about child abuse and neglect is reported by the counsellor with or without your consent.

This means that if you share information with adults at school that leads them to suspect (on reasonable grounds) that you, or others, have been (or are being) physically, emotionally or sexually abused or neglected, the law states they can no longer keep the information confidential. The record of these notifications is not kept in your student file for all staff to see, but stored securely and separately.

## Managing your personal information at school

### Your student file

At school educators directly involved in your schooling have access to the information about you held in your student file. The folder includes information provided as part of your enrolment and collected throughout your school career, such as your school assessments and letters to and from your parents.

## On computer

Some information about your education is stored electronically and is made available through computer systems to others within the public education system in South Australia, through Education Department Schools Administrative System–EDSAS. Examples of information shared in this way are your attendance records and results from national literacy and numeracy tests. You and your parents/carers have a right to view these files (Freedom of Information Act, 1991).

## School-based counsellor's records

The information you share with the counsellor is often very personal. This information **will not** go into your student file. Instead it is managed by the counsellor who is required to keep the information secure, and dispose of it carefully when it is no longer relevant to your education or welfare.

*Record Keeping:* school counsellors are required to keep records of their work with students. The records enable them to remember accurately important information, so they can identify issues and make decisions.

Counsellors make notes of:

- information shared
- advice given
- actions taken
- agreements reached
- consent refused or given
- incidents witnessed

These records can be referred to at a later time to ensure events and issues are remembered accurately. In some instances, such as emergency events and reports of child abuse and neglect, record keeping is a requirement for people working in schools.

(See **Mandatory Notification Requirements**)

## Keeping records safe

*Keeping records safe:* A counsellor's records must be kept securely, either in a locked file or password protected if kept electronically. The counsellor makes sure that the information recorded is accurate and complete. To do this they regularly update records so that what is kept remains relevant to your current situation.