

HIGHVIEW COLLEGE STUDENTS 'AT RISK' POLICY



Person Responsible – Director of Pastoral Care

Rationale

Highview College staff are to provide the best possible learning environment for their students. This includes catering for those young people whose emotional distress may lead to less than expected educational achievement. This will vary from mild distress, which may occur for a short period of time in a significant number of young people, to distress which may lead to the young person engaging in risk-taking actions/behaviours.

Aims

- To assist staff to notice a young person in distress.
- To create a caring community
- To provide a safe, nurturing environment that facilitates optimal learning for our students.

Behaviour Indicators of Distress (Students At Risk):

The decision to refer a young person is based on the overall severity of the symptoms and intuition about the degree of risk, rather than the number of symptoms. These may include:

- Unexpected deterioration of academic performance
- Ideas and themes of depression, death and suicide
- Change in mood
- Grief about a significant loss
- Withdrawal from relationships
- Physical symptoms with emotional cause
- High-risk behaviours

Specific Roles

Principal / Deputy Principal of Pastoral Care

The Principal has a 'designated person' to act on her behalf: the Deputy Principal – Pastoral Care. The overall management responsibility lies with the Deputy Principal – Pastoral Care, who reports directly to the Principal.

Deputy Principal – Pastoral Care:

- Identifies the level of risk/initial assessment of students
- Liaises with Year Level Co-ordinators
- Refers to appropriate professional support e.g. Psychologist, Psychiatrist, health agency, Counsellors

- Co-ordinates and communicates within the school and with the family
- Provides counselling and ongoing support to students 'at risk', as appropriate
- Manages follow-up support and monitoring for 'at risk' students returning to school
- When necessary protects other students from 'at risk' students

Staff

- Provide assistance in recognising and reporting 'emotional distress' and 'at risk' symptoms in students
- Immediately refer 'at risk' students to the Deputy Principal – Pastoral Care
- Provide ongoing support and assistance to students/families as part of the management

External Health Professionals

- Provide specialist intervention and support to students 'at risk'
- Co-ordinate management plan/ongoing intervention for high-risk students
- The Deputy Principal – Pastoral Care, establishes links/networks with experienced health professionals

Parents and Family

- Parents and family are integral to the school management plan, so it is important the school liaises closely with the family, via the Deputy Principal – Pastoral Care and/or the appropriate Year Level Co-ordinator.

Confidentiality

- Confidentiality issues arise when the trust relationship between the student and school personnel comes into conflict with the need to ensure the safety of the student and/or others. Ideally, every effort should be made to encourage the young person to share their concerns with others, however decisions must be made in terms of the best interest of the young person, e.g. individual rights/privacy vs immediate risk/safety.
- This is where a relationship of trust needs to exist between staff members and those who have the confidential information in the school. Staff are to act on advice or instruction from the Deputy Principal (Pastoral Care) and/or Principal – even if they are unable to be supplied with the full details.
- The Deputy Principal (Pastoral Care) has the role of deciding who needs to be informed and the details that are to be passed on.

Adapted from Michael Carr-Gregg's website

Within the School

The following people will either need to be informed, or will consider they need to be informed. The Deputy Principal (Pastoral Care) has the role of deciding who needs to be informed at what level.

- Principal
- Senior Executive
- Year Level Co-ordinator
- Home Group teacher, subject teachers
- Friends of student “at risk”, who are impacted by the situation

Outside School

- Family
- External specialists

While it is recognised that most staff have a desire to be informed, and assist, the sensitivity of the situation, and recognition of confidentiality and respect for those most vulnerable in the situation (the student) – may mean that not all staff will be briefed, and/or that briefing information will be minimal (e.g. particular noting of absenteeism). Co-operation from staff, even if not given confidential personal information and/or involved, is critical. All concerns and information are to be directed to the Deputy Principal - Pastoral Care. The main concern is the wellbeing of the student.

Adapted from Michael Carr-Gregg's website

Additional Information

APPENDIX A Recognition of Young People at Risk

Policy developed by J. Wardrop – 2010

Updated by Marion Martin – 2016

APPENDIX A RECOGNITION OF YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK

Common signs of distress that staff may notice and which should lead to referral to the Deputy Principal – Pastoral Care for clarification and identification of risk:

- Unexpected deterioration of academic performance
- Unusual failure to complete assignments, apathetic in class, has recently received a very much lower than expected grade, extremely disappointed at being rejected for a course or demonstrates abrupt changes in attendance, such as increased absences, tardiness, or truancy.
- Ideas and themes of depression, death and suicide
- Reading selections, written essays, conversation, and artwork contain themes of depression, death and suicide. Statements or suggestions that she would not be missed if she was gone. Appears to collect and discuss information on suicide methods. Begins giving away prized possessions (possibly with some elevation in mood) and has demonstrated previous direct or indirect suicide threats or attempts.
- Change in mood
- Withdrawal, sudden tearfulness, and remarks, which indicate profound unhappiness, despair, hopelessness, helplessness. Anger at self, increased irritability, moodiness and aggressiveness. Lack of interest in surroundings and activities and marked emotional instability. New involvement in high risk activities.
- Grief about a significant loss
- Stress due to the recent disintegration of the family or has had a recent death or suicide in the family or has lost a friend through death or suicide or a break up with a boyfriend.
- Withdrawal from relationships
- Change in relationships with friends and classmates. Loses interest in extra-curricular activities and may drop out of sports and other clubs. Begins to spend long periods of time alone.
- Seek assessment/support from services recommended by the school.