



ST PIUS X HIGH SCHOOL POLICY STATEMENT: STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

1. Rationale

St Pius High School is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment that supports and develops the mental health of all students. Responsibility for mental health and wellbeing of students is shared amongst the school, the student, the student's family, the health system and the wider community. Mental health and wellbeing is fundamental to successful learning. Students who are predominantly happy, confident, resilient and able to establish functional and meaningful relationships with themselves and others are better placed to achieve positive learning outcomes. St Pius X High School seeks to be proactive in developing opportunities for students through a wide range of curriculum and co-curricular activities that fosters a sense of connectedness to a safe school community and that assists in developing social, emotional and resilience skills.

Australia's National Youth Mental Health Foundation, Headspace describes mental health issues as being the single biggest issue facing young people. The following statistics are quoted:

- Approximately 14% of 12-17 year olds and 27% of 18-25 year olds experience these problems each year.
- 75% of mental health problems emerge before the age of 25.
- Up to 50% of substance use problems are preceded by mental health issues in young people.
- High suicide rates in early to mid-adulthood are related to untreated mental health problems in the late teenage and early adult years.
- Overall, mental health and substance use disorders account for 60-70% of the burden of disease among 15-24 year olds.
- Currently only one in four young people experiencing mental health problems actually receives professional help.
- Even among young people with the most severe mental health problems only 50% receive professional help.

Source: <http://www.headspace.org.au/about-headspace/what-we-do/why-headspace> [accessed March 2014.]

This policy recognises:

- The significance of the ever- increasing demand on the school community of St Pius X and its limited resources to support students with mental health issues.
- That the role of School Psychologist is both a necessity and critical in supporting mental health issues in schools.
- Personal and professional limitations of Teaching and Support Staff in assisting students with mental health issues.

- The significance of an inclusive learning environment to the ongoing development of a student's social and emotional wellbeing.
- That social, emotional and resilience skills can be learned.
- That some students may experience varying degrees of mental health difficulties during their school life.
- Schools will have an integral role in managing and supporting students' and their families through periods of mental health difficulties.
- Early intervention and diagnosis is a significant factor in supporting the student.
- The development and implementation of a mental health care plan is an effective strategy to support the student and the school.
- The difficulty in the Newcastle and Hunter Area Health system of access, both in the private and public health sectors, to medical and mental health professionals for formal diagnoses.
- School staff are not mental health experts. The school will take what they deem to be reasonable measures to manage and support students with mental health issues. The "test" of reasonableness will be at the discretion of the School Principal. "Reasonableness" will be determined in relation to resources available, the ability to provide a safe school environment for the all students and staff of St Pius X. **The Principal in consultation with the Assistant Director of the Catholic Schools office has the right to grant leave to a student who is at risk of significant harm to themselves and/or others.**
- Mental health issues can impact on student learning. Reasonable adjustments to curriculum, attendance and discipline may be required to support the student. **The adjustments made to the mental health care plan must enable the student to be able to study and perform essential course work.**
- It is imperative that in managing and supporting students with mental health difficulties, schools need to work in partnership with the student, the family, medical practitioners and other appropriate clinical care providers and mental health specialists.
- Confidentiality of personal information about the student is a priority. There needs to be however, an acceptance of reasonable disclosure through informed consent to all essential stakeholders. This will assist in the safety and wellbeing of all students and school staff.
- There is an impact of student mental health issues on classroom teachers and support staff. Consideration needs to be given to reasonable disclosure of information to enable staff to effectively manage, nurture and support the student.
- That staff should have access to ongoing professional development relating to adolescent mental health issues.

2. Aims

St Pius X High School through this Student Mental Health Policy aims:

- 2.1 To provide a safe and inclusive environment for students with mental health issues.
- 2.2 To create within the school a climate enlivened by the Gospel values of love, compassion, tolerance, respect, acceptance and justice.
- 2.3 To work in partnership with the student, their family/carers and all their support networks for a timely return to school following a medical intervention relating to a mental health issue.
- 2.4 To provide structures and practices which maintain consistency of procedures in implementing, managing and reviewing mental health care plans.

- 2.5 To communicate with relevant teachers and support staff, the agreed level of information documented in the mental health care plan.
- 2.6 To utilise all internal resources to assist the student with their mental health issues.
- 2.7 Where possible, to liaise with external resources to assist the student with their mental health issues.
- 2.8 To consider the welfare, safety and risk to all members of the St Pius X community, staff and students.
- 2.9 To make decisions regarding the mental health and the safety of all students and staff in a reasonable and equitable manner.
- 2.10 To expect responsibility and accountability of the student, their family/carer in following the agreed mental health care plans. This will include, but is not limited to:
 - The taking of prescribed medication.
 - Acts or threats of self- harm in the school environment.
 - Misuse of pass out cards.
 - Agreement to follow appropriate safety parameters **identified in mental health care plans and/or risk assessment**. Examples of this can be, but are not limited to;
 - ❖ Levels of supervision, school boundaries, reporting procedures.
 - ❖ Participation in extra-curricular activities and school excursions.
- 2.11 To expect professionalism and support from all school staff in implementing, managing and reviewing mental health care plans.
- 2.12 To expect that all school staff will support the student within the agreed parameters outlined in the mental health care plans including; curriculum adjustments, adjustments within the classroom or where required, changing the physical location of classrooms.

3. Definitions

The following definitions are meant to assist in understanding the terms used in the procedural aspects of this policy within an educational and school context:

- **Mental health difficulties**
Students' who have mental health difficulties including diagnosed and undiagnosed issues, generally demonstrate behaviour and or emotional responses at a level of frequency, duration and intensity that differ from normal expectations that adversely affect the student's educational performance and participation in school life.
- **Early intervention**
Identifying signs of a mental health difficulty and providing support and or / implementing strategies within the school policy with the aim to prevent any problems from worsening.
- **Confidentiality**
Maintaining the integrity of the student's personal information. Confidentiality also recognises that dissemination of agreed personal information, through informed consent, is helpful in managing the student in the school environment

- **Educational adjustments**

The agreed curriculum adjustments must enable the student to engage in study and perform essential course work. Adjustments will generally fit into a three-tiered system of minor (green), moderate (amber) or significant (red).

- **Informed consent**

The release of agreed information to school staff about the student's health issue. Informed consent is gained in writing, from the student and their parent/carer. It can be, but is not limited to the formulation of a mental health care plan. Informed consent is requested by the school, from the student and their family, for the purposes of better supporting the student in the school environment.

- **Personal information**

All information whether fact or opinion which identifies the student.

- **Level of risk**

The assessed risk of harm to the student in the school environment. The assessment of this risk can be supported by the opinion of medical practitioners and clinical care providers; however, the School Principal will be the final arbiter of assessed or perceived risk. This ultimately is a subjective judgment determined by relevant school staff. It is based on the school's ability to support the student and keep them safe. This judgment will consider expert advice, school resources, information released through informed consent, and the health and wellbeing of other students and staff.

- **Harmful Behaviour**

Behaviours that negatively impact on the physical, emotional, social, mental and cognitive wellbeing of the student and or others in the St Pius Community.

- **Reasonableness**

Positive and proactive measures the school can undertake to support and guide a student with mental health issues. The school will determine what it can do within the parameters of risk; it's resources, structures and duty of care to other students and staff.

- **Collaboration**

Working with the student, their family or carer, medical practitioners, clinical care providers and other appropriate agencies to achieve the best outcome for the student. Working collaboratively is bound by limitations of the school's resources.

- **Return to School**

Return to the school environment after a medical intervention such as hospitalisation or direct disclosure of a self-harm episode will be at the discretion of the School Principal. The procedural flow chart documented in this policy will be followed. The school will endeavour to support the student's return to school, either whole or partially, in the most time effective manner it can reasonably manage. **The student is required to have medical certificate indicating they can return to school from their treating specialist.** The school will also take into consideration medical advice and support plans from appropriately qualified external agencies. The student will return to St Pius X once the school has had sufficient time to create and implement an agreed and signed mental health care plan. This plan will include; liaising with the student and their family/carer, assessing the student's needs, assessing the required school resources, a risk assessment, and communication with relevant school personnel. This procedure is followed in order to determine the school's ability to keep the student and wider school community safe.

- **Procedure**

Where there is a reasonable suspicion that a student may have a social, emotional wellbeing or mental health difficulty, the documented management processes in relation to risk assessment and mental health care plans will be implemented.

4. Implementation

The school will follow the steps as outlined in Procedures and Procedures Flow Chart when addressing mental health issues in students. The school expects the full support of parents/carers and staff on this important issue.

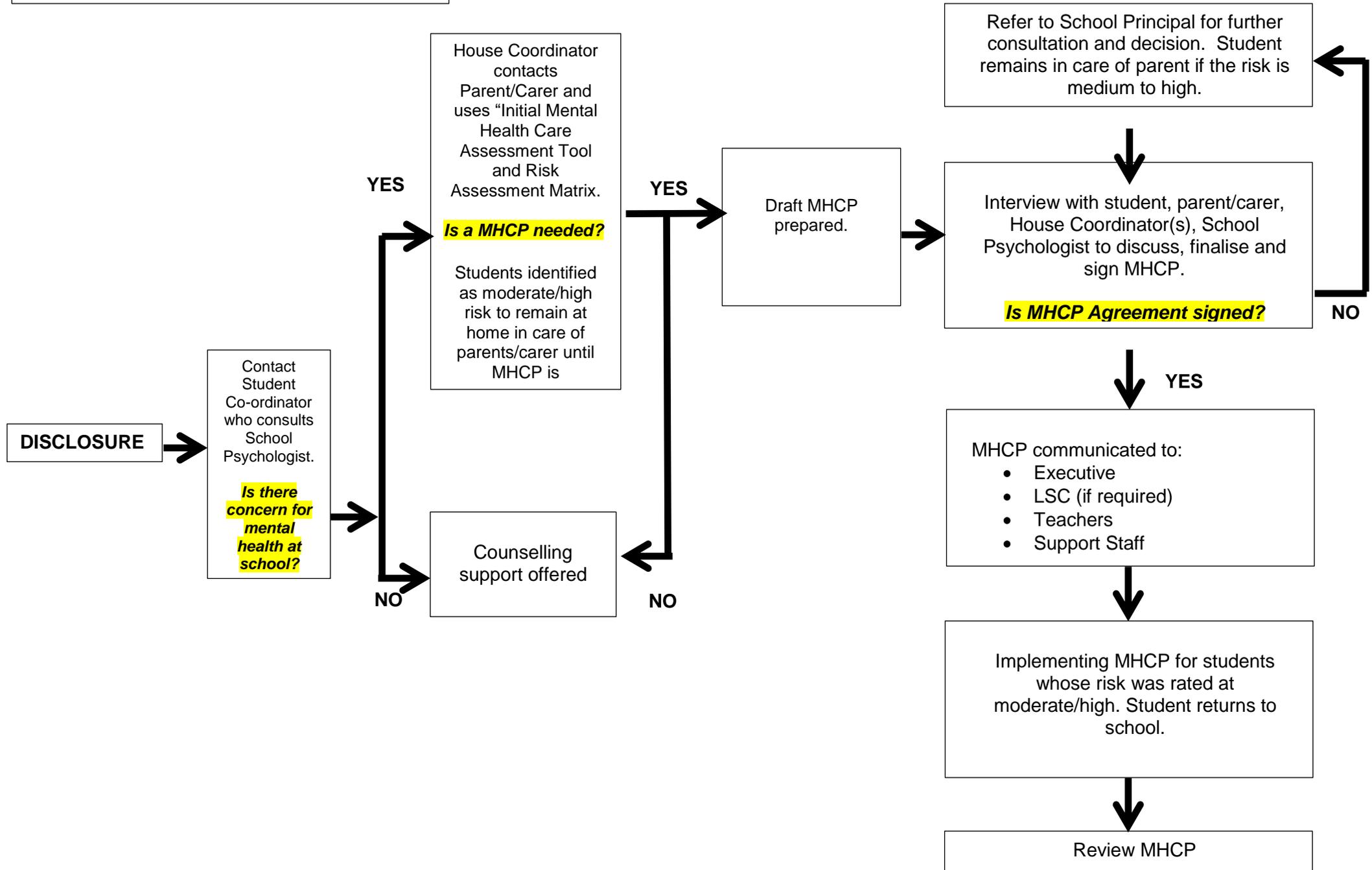
5. Procedures

The procedure and processes for identifying, managing and reviewing students with mental health issues are described in the following section “Procedures Flow Chart”. The basic steps are:

1. Identification or disclosure.
2. Initial Mental Health Care and Risk Assessment Tool.
3. Support student or refer to School Psychologist. If further action is required, proceed to step 4.
4. Mental Health Care Management Plan is developed.
5. Implementation of Mental Health Care Plan.
6. Review of Mental Health Care Plan.

5.1 PROCEDURES FLOW CHART

MENTAL HEALTH CARE PLAN PROCESS AND FLOW CHART



6. Budget

Funding will be made available within the School Budget to manage the mental health care process. This is currently through a 0.2 allocation of a nominated Mental Health Coordinator and a 0.2 allocation dispersed equally amongst six House Coordinators to manage mental health care plans and review processes. Budget considerations also will include allocations for staff development.

7. Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed and updated by the Mental Health Coordinator, House Coordinator Team and the School Executive every two (2) years or sooner if the need arises.