

Marymede Catholic College Online Counselling Procedure in the Event of a School Closure

Marymede Catholic College is fully committed to providing students with access to counselling support in the event of a partial or whole school closure. The purpose of the current document is:

- To ensure the college's Psychology team comply with the legal and ethical obligations when providing online psychological support.
- To outline procedures for delivering online counselling.

The procedures outlined in the current document adhere to the following legal and ethical frameworks:

- Code of Ethics, Australian Psychological Society (APS) (Reprinted 2018)
- Australian Privacy Principles outlined in the Privacy Act (1988)
- The framework for effective delivery of school psychology: A practice guide for psychologists and school leaders, APS (2016)

The procedures outlined also draw on the following guidelines:

- A practical guide to video mental health consultations – Mental Health Online, Swinburne University (2020)
- Principals for choosing videoconferencing technology, APS (2020)

Online platform

All student counselling sessions will be delivered via CoviU. Students can choose between different formats of counselling, audio only, video call or chat function. Both primary and secondary students will be asked to nominate their preference prior to the first session. Students can change their preference at any time during an appointment or prior to future appointments.

CoviU offers some opportunities to incorporate interactive games and use the interactive whiteboard. These functions will be used to assist with delivering therapy in an engaging and age-appropriate way, as with face-to-face counselling. Our psychologists will make every effort to adapt therapy tools to be used in an online context, however, there may be some limitations when providing online counselling.

Confidentiality

Coviu is compliant with the Australian Privacy Act (1998). Psychologists will continue to uphold the principle of Confidentiality outlined in the APS Code of Ethics (2018). All information obtained is stored in a confidential psychology file that is only accessible by the College Psychologists at Marymede Catholic College. The sessions will not be recorded. Therapeutic activities completed on the interactive whiteboard may be saved and stored in the student's confidential psychology file. The limitations to confidentiality are the same as for face-to-face counselling. All information will remain confidential except if:

1. It is subpoenaed by a court
2. Failure to disclose information would place the student or another person at risk of harm
3. With consent from student (secondary school students) and parent (primary school students)

While we discourage students from using their bedrooms for counselling session, we ask that students are in a private place for their appointment. The space should be quiet and free of distractions, and away from others so they cannot hear the student talk or see their screen. If students are unable to find a suitable space or feel uncomfortable about their confidentiality at any time during the session, they are encouraged to let the psychologist know.

Procedures

In the event of a partial or whole school closure, our College Psychologists will continue to provide short-term counselling support to students. As with face-to-face counselling at Marymede Catholic College, counselling support can be accessed by students during school terms and regular school hours (8:00 am – 4.00 pm). Our College Psychologists' days of work are:

- Morgan Cree (Psychologist): Mon, Tues, Wed & Fri 8.00 am – 4.00 pm
- Jessica Murphy (Provisional Psychologist): Mon-Fri 8.00 am – 4.00 pm
- Jaclyn Freeman (Clinical Psychologist): Mon-Fri 8.00 am – 4.00 pm

Students who are currently accessing counselling at the time of a school closure will be contacted by the psychologist and offered an online appointment. During the period of a school closure, we will continue to welcome new student referrals. The referral method remains the same and referrals can be made by secondary students, parents or teachers.

The same intake procedures will be followed when assessing new referrals. Based on the nature of the presenting problem, the referral will either be allocated to one of our College Psychologists or referred to an appropriate external service that is able to provide the support required. Students may be referred to an external service at any point. Some reasons for an external referral include, but are not limited to; a change in presentation, student's presenting concerns require a family approach to treatment, face-to-face counselling is required, a specialised service is required or the student is at-risk which requires more support than can be provided by a school counselling service.

Making an appointment

Following allocation of the referral, the assigned psychologist will contact secondary students via the student's college email account to obtain consent and arrange a suitable appointment time. For primary students, the assigned psychologist will contact their parent/guardian via phone to gather relevant background information, consent and schedule an appointment time for their child. Future appointments can be arranged at the end of each session or the student/parent/guardian can email the allocated psychologist directly to schedule subsequent appointments:

- Morgan Cree (Psychologist): morgan.cree@marymede.vic.edu.au
- Jessica Murphy (Provisional Psychologist): jessica.murphy@marymede.vic.edu.au
- Jaclyn Freeman (Clinical Psychologist): jaclyn.freeman@marymede.vic.edu.au

After scheduling an appointment, secondary students will receive a CoviU meeting invitation via their college email account. Parents of primary school students will receive a CoviU meeting invitation via their nominated email address and outlining that an adult must be home during the appointment. When clinically indicated, psychologists will contact parents via phone to provide feedback and parent support to assist their child.

Informed consent

An online counselling consent form will be emailed to secondary school students and primary school parents. To provide written consent, secondary school students and primary school parents will be required to read the consent form and send a return email stating that they provide consent prior to the first online counselling session. At the beginning of the first session, the psychologist will also verbally discuss consent with both secondary and primary school students. Consent is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time.

Structure of appointments and process to ensure safety

The section outlines the general structure of appointments that will be followed each session. Our College Psychologists will also take steps to ensure the safety of each is student.

In regard to secondary school students, the following process will be followed each session:

1. The student will receive an invitation via their college email prior to the scheduled appointment
2. The psychologist will wait on CoviU at the scheduled appointment time. If the student does not arrive in 10 minutes:
 - a. the psychologist will send a reminder email
 - b. if there is no response within 5 minutes via either email or CoviU, the psychologist will end the online session and send an email to reschedule
3. The psychologist will check that the student has access to a private space and feels comfortable with the mode of delivery (audio only, video or chat)
4. Students will be asked to provide their:
 - a. Current address where the student is located for the session
 - b. Current location of their parents/guardians listed on their student profile. If parents/guardians are deemed by the psychologist as too far away or difficult to contact, the student may be asked to provide the contact details of another adult who is nearby.
5. Students will be informed of the limitations to confidentiality at the beginning of each session and how concerns regarding risk will be managed in the event contact is unexpectedly cut.
6. Counselling session
7. The following steps will be followed should the student disclose information relating to risk of harm to self or other, and contact is unexpectedly cut:
 - a. The psychologist will immediately attempt to re-contact the student via CoviU
 - b. If the psychologist is able to contact the student, a risk assessment will be completed and limitations to confidentiality will be followed

- c. If unable to contact the student, depending on the level of risk disclosed the following steps may be taken:
 - i. Contact parent/guardian
 - ii. Contact emergency services
8. At the end of the session, the psychologist will seek feedback about the mode of delivery and whether the student wishes to change this next time. If required, the psychologist discuss scheduling another appointment time.

In regard to primary school students, the following process will be followed each session:

1. The parent will receive an invitation via their college email prior to the scheduled appointment
2. The psychologist will wait on CoviU at the scheduled appointment time. If the student does not arrive in 10 minutes:
 - a. the psychologist will send a reminder email to the parent/guardian
 - b. if there is no response within 5 minutes via either email or CoviU, the psychologist will end the online session and send an email to reschedule
3. At the beginning of the session the psychologist will request to briefly speak to an adult. If the adult present is not listed on the student's profile, the psychologist will ask for their current contact number
4. If an adult is not present, the following steps will be taken:
 - a. For a student aged 10 or older, the session will be terminated and rescheduled with parents for when an adult is present
 - b. For a student aged 9 or younger, the session will be terminated and immediately following the psychologist will contact the parent to check in and reschedule with parents when an adult is present
5. The psychologist will check that the student has access to a private space and feel comfortable with the mode of delivery (audio only, video or chat)
6. Students will be informed of the limitations to confidentiality at the beginning of each session.
7. Counselling session

8. If concerns arise during the session that need to be flagged with parents/guardian, this will be done either by requesting to speak to the adult present during the session or subsequent phone call.
9. At the end of the session, the psychologist will seek feedback about the mode of delivery and whether the student wishes to change this next time.
10. Following the session, the psychologist will contact the parent to schedule another appointment if required

General guidelines for students

Students are expected to follow the guidelines below:

- Students must be appropriately dressed in casual clothing which would be deemed appropriate to leave to house in
- Students must not wear pajamas
- We discourage students using their bedroom for sessions. However, if this is the only quiet and private space in the house, students must sit at a desk or chair, and not in their bed during the session

Procedure for responding to inappropriate behaviour

If the student is behaving in a manner deemed inappropriate by the psychologist, the psychologist will follow these steps:

1. The psychologist will inform the student that their behaviour is not appropriate for a counselling session and if it continues the session will be terminated.
2. If the student continues to engage in the inappropriate behaviour, the psychologist will inform the student and parent/guardian of primary school student that they are terminating the session.
3. The psychologist will consult with the school psychology team to decide how to proceed.
4. After consultation, the psychologist will contact the student or parent/guardian of primary school student to advise of the outcome.

Community support

Students and parents can also access support within the community. Some support options include:

Kids Help Line	1800 55 1800	https://kidshelpline.com.au/get-help/webchat-counselling
Headspace	1800 650 890	https://headspace.org.au/eheadspace/
Beyond Blue	1300 22 4636	https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/national-help-lines-and-websites
Lifeline	13 11 14	https://www.lifeline.org.au/
Local GP		A GP can provide initial support and referral to external psychologist

Crisis support

If you are concerned about a student's immediate safety or wellbeing please contact either 000 or the North Eastern Crisis Assessment Service on 1300 859 789.