

## COUNSELLING

### Background

Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools (GSACRD) is a welcoming Christ-centered learning community. All students are respected as gifts from God and have opportunities to provide optimal hope, engagement and well-being as a result of the care and education provided by professional teaching staff, parents and the community.

GSACRD is dedicated to providing a continuum of supports and services for all students and for each student including students with diverse learning needs. Through a continuum of universal, targeted and intensive individualized supports and services, school learning teams work collaboratively to identify and meet the needs of learners. The collaborative problem solving approach is used at the district and school levels to realize the district goal of success for all students and for each student.

GSACRD enlists counsellors, student support facilitators, youth coaches and social workers who support the mission, vision and ethos of the district. In GSACRD, faith is integrated or permeated into every program and aspect of school life, and the Catholic identity is expressed in every dimension of a Catholic School, including the counselling services provided at a school. Many teaching and learning opportunities for permeation of the faith present in the provision of counselling services in schools and social, emotional, behavioural and moral decisions are made in light of Gospel values. The support provided by counsellors, student support facilitators, youth coaches and social workers for individual students honors and reinforces the teachings of the Catholic Church. Therefore, counsellors, student support facilitators, youth coaches and social workers are aware of Church teachings, especially on issues such as sexuality, self-harm and relationships.

It is the duty of Catholic school counsellors, student support facilitators, youth coaches and social workers to uphold the GSACRD Catholic school mission as well as the unique mission and identity of their schools by providing services to help children to develop morally healthy attitudes toward themselves and others. Therefore, the goal of Catholic school counselling programs is to promote the child's spiritual and emotional growth, to support loving and positive communication within the family and school setting, and to increase school success for children and students.

### Guidelines

1. Counsellors, student support facilitators, youth coaches and social workers are accountable to the district, the school, families and the students in their care. The principal supervises all staff employed in schools. Counselling services are placed within the context of a school rather than a clinical environment.

2. Principals and teachers may seek advice and feedback from counsellors to ensure students are safe, cared for, and learning at school.

School-based counselling services aim to provide the universal, targeted (small group) and, at times, individual supports required for students to be successful at school. Services may be developmental, preventative, or crisis-oriented and include:

- 2.1 Group processes which assist students with personal, social, educational or career issues.
  - 2.2 Individual processes which assist students with specific personal, social, educational or career issues.
3. Parents are informed of the counselling services available in the district. All staff, parents and peers may refer individual students for counselling services. Students may also self-refer. Counselling services are integral to the provision of supports and services in a school. Parents and guardians do not require notification if a student is referred to the counsellor, or personally initiates that contact, for one to three consultations. The counsellor will contact administration and parents immediately if a student shares information that suggests the student may be at risk of harming him or herself or others, or requires protection from others. If individual counselling services are to continue for more than one to three initial visits, parents and legal guardians must be notified and consent must be provided. There must be a record documenting parent consent. (e.g. Documentation by the Counsellor indicating verbal parental consent has been provided). Students will be informed by staff of the requirement to inform parents if individual counselling is to continue.

An independent student, as defined by the School Act, [Part II, Transitional, Interpretation (m)], has the autonomy to seek and participate in counselling services without parental consent.

Students and guardians have the right to refuse or discontinue counselling at any time, and it is the responsibility of the counsellor, student support facilitator, youth coach or social worker to ensure that rights of autonomy are respected. It is also the responsibility of the counsellor, student support facilitator, youth coach or social worker to respect confidentiality and to discern when staff and parents need to know information. Counsellors, student support facilitators, youth coaches and social workers should encourage students to communicate with their parents or guardians whenever possible and offer support to this end where it would benefit the students' learning and well-being. Students should not be offered levels of confidentiality that cannot be kept. Decisions regarding confidentiality are made in the interests of safeguarding and promoting student welfare with parent/guardian and student knowledge and consent. All members of the school counselling team will follow confidentiality rules except as required by law.

4. Records on individual counselling sessions must be kept in a secure place in the school to preserve confidentiality. Once students leave the district, confidential counselling records are stored at district office for 27 years from the student's date of birth. Please see AP320 Student Records.

5. To best meet the needs of students, counsellors, student support facilitators, youth coaches and social workers will work collaboratively with community agencies and refer students to appropriate services.

References:

Guidance and Counselling Policy 1.6.3

Murray, R.J., Kane, K.S. (2010) In Service of Mission: Assessing Catholic School Guidance Counsellors. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, 14(2), 173-194.

Calgary Catholic School District: IHAMB: Family Life/Human Sexuality Education

AP214 (Inclusive Education)

AP320 (Student Records)

AP353 (Students at Risk)

AP359 (Safe and Caring Learning Environments for Students)

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