

# Guidance Officer Policy



## APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY

This policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Guidance Officer employed at Peregian Beach College and other staff when responding to students' counselling, mental health, wellbeing needs, and learning needs.

### 1. SCOPE

This policy outlines Peregian Beach College's commitment to provide high quality guidance services. By providing quality guidance services, the school aims to positively support the mental health, wellbeing, and learning outcomes of students.

The Guidance Officer's role includes: Working as a part of the Student Services Team to provide professional expertise, leadership and support that contributes to student wellbeing. This may include psychological assessment, counselling, intervention, and referral services, to assist students in achieving positive educational, developmental and lifelong learning outcomes.

## STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Peregian Beach College is strongly committed to supporting the mental health, wellbeing, and learning outcomes of students. Peregian Beach College will ensure that students have access to high quality, evidence based and ethically informed guidance services. Peregian Beach College is also committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of their Guidance Officer and providing them with the resources and opportunities necessary to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.

## POLICY STATEMENT

### Student mental health and wellbeing

Peregian Beach College recognises that supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students is vitally important and integral to students' learning, participation in the classroom and school community and achievement of longer-term life outcomes. To better support students' mental health and wellbeing, Peregian Beach College, when required, will help students access services, either through the Guidance Officer directly, or by providing information about relevant internal or external supports.

### Duty of care

All Peregian Beach College staff, including the Guidance Officer, have a duty of care to all students enrolled at the school.

### 2. THE GUIDANCE SERVICE

Peregian Beach College must ensure:

- guidance services are delivered by professionals with the required expertise, qualifications and current professional registration or accreditation;
- operation and location of the service ensures the safety of students and guidance staff;
- the Principal, Guidance Officer and other staff understand and action their roles and responsibilities;
- regular communication between the Guidance Officer, their line manager and/or the Principal;
- the Guidance Officer has the support and resources necessary to deliver the guidance services; and
- the school supports the Guidance Officer to regularly engage in professional development, professional supervision, and professional network meetings.

### 3. PLANNING AND DELIVERING GUIDANCE SERVICES

The following matters must be taken into consideration by the Guidance Officer, their line manager and/or the Principal when planning and delivering guidance services.

#### Timing of sessions with students

Sessions with students will occur during school hours.

### **Frequency of sessions with students**

Generally, the Guidance Officer will assist students by providing brief interventions and is unable to provide a therapy model. Frequency and duration of sessions will be dependent upon need and access to external services.

### **Location of guidance facilities**

All guidance sessions will take place on school premises in facilities that maintain student privacy, ensure the safety of both the student and Guidance Officer and fulfil obligations in relation to duty of care.

### **Communication about a student's whereabouts**

The Guidance Officer must maintain accurate records of all appointments with students and ensure information about a student's whereabouts is communicated to relevant staff and in accordance with school policy and procedures.

### **Referral Processes**

Outlined parent, teacher, and self-referral processes must be adhered to, unless in exceptional, or highly sensitive circumstances. Student self-referral is also available for students aged 14yrs or older. Self-referrals are fielded and communicated by home room teachers. A stepped model of care approach is applied in triage of referrals and management of current wellbeing case.

### **Referral Appropriateness**

Referrals will be triaged by the Student Services Team, unless exceptional or sensitive circumstances exist. Referrals that indicate a functional impact for the student at school will be assigned a case manager within the Student Services Support Team. Referrals that fall outside of this scope will be addressed by providing external support options for the student. In some cases, interim support may be deemed appropriate.

### **Consent for services provided by the Guidance Officer**

Valid consent must be obtained prior to the provision of guidance services.

- Verbal consent* may be used for brief interventions, academic counselling or participation in group or information sessions.
- Written consent*, including limitations of confidentiality, must be obtained from a student and/or parent before commencing a longer term or more complex counselling intervention or administering a psycho-educational test, particularly where the student information will be transmitted and/or stored outside Australia.
- Parental consent* must be obtained when the student is younger than 14 years of age or when the Guidance Officer has deemed that the student does not have the capacity to give informed consent.
- Student consent* may be relied upon when the student is in secondary school and is deemed to have capacity to give informed consent.
- The Guidance Officer must inform the Principal when intending to provide services to a primary school student without parent knowledge and consent.

### **Confidentiality**

Guidance Officers and schools must comply with legislation, policy requirements, and professional standards in relation to confidentiality of information disclosed, recorded, and stored about students and families. Prior to providing guidance services, the guidance officer must inform the student and/or parent/carer of the limitations of confidentiality. Unless information sharing relates to a limitation identified by the guidance officer, including required by law or subpoena, the Guidance Officer must obtain written consent from the student and/or parent/carer prior to sharing information.

### **Accountabilities and reporting**

To ensure the provision of quality guidance services and fulfilment of duty of care obligations:

1. the Guidance Officer must meet on a regular basis with their line manager and/or the Principal (at least twice a term); about their activities and the services provided through the counselling service; and
2. the Guidance Officer, their line manager and/or the Principal will, at least once a year, review the services provided to ensure they address the type and volume of need within the school.

In those schools where the Principal is the Guidance Officer's line manager, the activities outlined in point 2 may be completed during the meetings referred to in point 1.

## 4. FEEDBACK/COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIANCE

When a student, parent or member of staff has concerns about or wishes to provide feedback on the guidance services delivered or a Guidance Officer's interactions with a student, they should discuss their concerns or feedback with the Principal who, if required, will respond in accordance with the *Complaints Management Policy and Procedures*.

When the concerns relate to inappropriate behaviour by the Guidance Officer towards a student, the Principal must comply with the *Student Protection Policy and Procedures*. The Principal will ensure this policy is made available to the members of the school community.

## 5. POLICY REVIEW

The Board, or its delegate, in consultation with the school will review this policy and the Guidelines two (2) years from the effective date.

## DEFINITIONS

### **Brief intervention**

It is acknowledged that different guidance professionals use different terms to describe the nature of their interactions with their clients. The term 'brief intervention' will be used to describe a short-term intervention by the Guidance Officer where the service is completed in a limited number of contacts. Over the course of a school year, the Guidance Officer may provide one or more brief interventions to a student which are discreet blocks of service that arise as the student identifies new issues or needs and seeks the Guidance Officer's assistance in resolving the matters.

### **Guidance Officer (including if a registered psychologist)**

For the purposes of this policy, a Guidance Officer is:

- a skilled professional with specialist knowledge and expertise in relation to mental health, wellbeing, and learning, who understands educational systems and the unique complexities of schools and classrooms; and
- an individual who has been employed by Peregrine Beach College and works on a full-time, part-time or casual basis.

A Guidance Officer may be:

- an educator with teaching qualifications and either Masters level postgraduate qualifications in guidance and counselling, or postgraduate qualifications in psychology, who is a member of the Queensland Guidance and Counselling Association or the Australian Counselling Association; or
- a psychologist registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency who may also have membership of the Australian Psychological Society.

### **Longer term or more complex intervention**

It is acknowledged that different guidance professionals use different terms to describe the nature of their interactions with their clients. The term 'longer term or more complex intervention' will be used to describe a service provided by the Guidance Officer which:

- involves longer term contact with a student, for example more than 3 or 4 sessions, in relation to an ongoing issue or counselling need – for instance, a student's mental health condition may require school-based case management over more than six months by the Guidance Officer as part of a mental health plan coordinated by a psychologist, General Practitioner, Counsellor or private psychiatrist; or
- due to the complexity or level of risk associated with the concerns, would necessitate obtaining valid written consent for the services and/or may require the sharing of information to ensure compliance with duty of care or legislative obligations or to enable the development of a support plan.