

# Onslow College Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

## Statement of Intent:

Onslow College acknowledges that all members of the school community are likely to experience challenges in their lives and go through periods of mental and emotional distress.

This policy has been developed to position the College to be responsive to those members experiencing mental health issues and develop a positive school culture that promotes mental health and wellbeing.

## Rationale:

To build a safe school environment that supports individual students and staff to care for their mental wellbeing. This will include continued efforts to reduce stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness.

## Board Expectations:

The College will follow best practice guidelines set out by the NZ Mental Health Foundation\* to promote a mentally healthy, safe school community, through consideration of the following three elements:

1. The development of a positive, psychologically healthy school environment
2. A proactive, fair and empathetic approach to mental health concerns
3. Supporting members of the school community to engage in activities that boost mental health and wellbeing.

The College will do this through:

- Raising awareness in the school community through the provision of appropriate education programmes to promote mental health wellness and the identification of mental unwellness. In the latter situation encourage people to seek appropriate help.
- Assessing the needs of students experiencing mental health issues on a needs by needs basis
- Treating students and staff who have mental health issues with fairness and empathy and taking steps to ensure they are not subjected to stigma or discrimination
- Encouraging parent/whānau involvement in the assessment and treatment of mental health issues and any subsequent support.

## Guidelines and Procedures:

1. An individual's ethnicity, gender, support systems, and privacy will be taken into consideration before any actions or procedures are put into place for them if they are experiencing mental health difficulties.

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2. Implement education programmes to empower individuals to have the knowledge and skills to understand mental illness and safely offer support.
3. Provide appropriate induction and training for new staff members.
4. Help students and staff who have been affected by mental health issues return to school with support and appropriate resourcing on a needs by needs basis.
5. Allow greater self-management of possible stressors eg: marking/workloads and deadlines through the careful scheduling of assessments and NCEA internals
6. Have procedures in place to allow students to leave class when they need to take time out.
7. Ensure all Staff and Students have access to counselling and early intervention services.

### **Supporting Documents:**

Ministry of Education National Administration Guidelines (NAG 5)

EAP (Employment Assistance Programme) for Staff

Appendix One

### **Delegations:**

The implementation of this policy is delegated to the Principal.

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## Appendix 1

The range of mental and emotional experiences may include:

- People who are experiencing optimal or positive mental health. This group will be engaged, generally happy, sleeping and eating well, experiencing positive relationships and with a strong sense of meaning and purpose in life. This group is likely to experience better physical health and higher levels of engagement.
- People who are mentally unwell and/or have a diagnosed mental illness (eg: depression, anxiety) who are receiving treatment but still be able to attend school, (perhaps with a modified timetable).
- People who lack general mental wellbeing and a sense of being reasonably happy with life. These often show up as disengaged and unmotivated and lack meaning and purpose in their daily lives. (According to decades of mind/body research this group is likely to have higher rates of physical illness and accidents).
- People who don't meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental illness but who may be highly stressed or distressed due to their school or home life or perhaps a traumatic life event.

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