

Chaplaincy and student wellbeing officer services

Policy Statement

A state school community can engage a chaplain or student wellbeing officer to complement other support services in the school. These workers provide optional pastoral care to support the general wellbeing of students and the school community; are an additional adult role model in the school; and enhance engagement with the broader community.

Services offered by chaplains and student wellbeing officers are inclusive of, and show respect for all religious and non-religious beliefs and worldviews represented in the school community. All activities and events provided are optional, non-discriminatory and equally available to students of all beliefs. These services are provided at the discretion of the school principal, in consultation with the school community.

Establishing a service

Local community support, including from the Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C)/School Council, is required for the introduction of a chaplaincy or a student wellbeing officer service. This support is to be documented (e.g. in minutes of a P&C meeting) and will include justification as to why the service is supported, taking into consideration the needs of the student population and the characteristics of the school community.

All state schools are provided an opportunity to access application-based funding for these services through State Government or Australian Government funding.

In addition, schools may choose to provide a chaplaincy or student wellbeing officer service at any time using:

- school-based funds, and/or
- community-raised funds which have been raised specifically for these services, and/or
- volunteer workers.

School communities may engage either a chaplain or a student wellbeing officer with due consideration to the outcome of (documented) community consultation and at the discretion of the principal.

Any changes to the type of worker (i.e. if switching from a chaplain to a student wellbeing officer) during a funding period should be reported to the department by emailing chaplainswellbeingofficers@qed.qld.gov.au.

State schools do not directly employ chaplains or student wellbeing officers and are required to engage such workers through an external organisation that has been accredited by the Department of Education, known as an Accredited Employing Authority (AEA). While the AEA is responsible for the recruitment, selection and employment of the worker, principal endorsement of the AEA's selection is required. The AEA is also responsible for the ongoing professional development, training and professional supervision of the worker in areas pertinent to their role in the school.

The principal works with the chaplain/student wellbeing officer, AEA, P&C/School Council and relevant local committees to develop the officer's role and workplan ([Form 2: Workplan](#)), taking into consideration the needs of the student population and the characteristics of the school community.



As part of their recruitment and selection process, before they commence their service, chaplains and student wellbeing officers must hold a valid blue card, and successfully undertake a school-based induction program which includes completion of the department's [Mandatory All Staff-Training Program – Key messages guide for contractors, volunteers, visitors, preservice teachers and other adult students on placements](#) (the Guide). The Guide includes [Student Protection](#) and [Code of Conduct](#) requirements.

Delivering a service

Where the school community supports the introduction of a chaplaincy or student wellbeing officer service, general interaction between students and the worker within the school does not require additional parental consent, unless a religious component (e.g. lunchtime prayer group) forms part of that principal-endorsed interaction or activity. While it is not compulsory for any student to participate in activities or receive services from a chaplain or student wellbeing officer, written informed [consent](#) is required for ongoing one-to-one meetings with the worker.

The school principal has the discretion to make final decisions about the delivery of particular activities or programs by the chaplain or student wellbeing officer. Should a school chaplain wish to organise a program/activity that may have a religious component (e.g. a camp organised by the chaplain/AEA during school holidays; lunchtime prayer group), the school should clearly communicate the details of this activity or program to allow parents/caregivers to make an informed decision about their child's participation or non-participation. Parental consent is required for a student's involvement in such activities/events.

Chaplains and student wellbeing officers do not provide specialist services to students, such as professional counselling, professional mental health and psychological services and other allied health services. Religious instruction and religious counselling are also not provided under these programs. Chaplains and student wellbeing officers are not permitted to engage in evangelising or proselytising, nor attempt to undermine a student's religious or other beliefs.

In order to ensure coordinated case management of student support, each referral that a chaplain or student wellbeing officer makes to an external agency requires the explicit approval of the school's principal, deputy principal, or guidance officer, and consent of the parent (or student if deemed competent by the principal to provide this consent).

Details of the chaplain's or student wellbeing officer's role in the school, including programs or activities to be delivered or organised, should be clearly outlined in the [Form 2: Workplan](#). This should be approved by the AEA, worker, principal and the P&C President or a member of the P&C executive. The Form 2: Workplan should be updated accordingly should the worker's role vary during the contract period.

Managing a service

Although chaplains and student wellbeing officers are employees of the AEA and operate in schools as contractors, they are still subject to legislative and departmental procedures that impact on their duties, as well as reasonable directions from the principal (or delegate).

The principal ensures that all chaplain and student wellbeing officer records in relation to these services are secured in accordance with the relevant provisions of the [Public Records Act 2002](#), the [Information Privacy Act 2009](#) and the [Education \(General Provisions\) Act 2006](#). Schools provide the worker with access to secure storage facilities to enable confidential case records to be securely stored onsite.



The principal reports any instance of suspected inappropriate behaviour or conduct by AEA staff (including the chaplain/student wellbeing officer), including behaviour considered in breach of either the *Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service* or the department's Student Protection procedure and guidelines, in accordance with existing departmental protocols to the department's [Conduct and Complaints team](#). Where required, a separate report must also be lodged to the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, and the Queensland Police Service.

The principal deals with complaints associated with these services in a fair and equitable manner, and ensures that all accountability and reporting procedures occur as required.

Forms

- [Form 1: Parent/Student Consent form](#)
- [Form 2: Workplan](#)

