

Consent for school psychology and social work services:

Information for students and parents/carers

The following information must be read, or explained to, and understood by, any person providing consent for a student to access psychology or social work services.

Psychology and social work services

School psychologists and social workers are qualified professionals who support students with mental health, wellbeing, learning, development, and social challenges. Where appropriate, they work collaboratively with families, school staff, and external agencies to create safe and supportive learning environments. Students are typically referred through the school's support team.

Psychologists:

All psychologists, including those working in schools, are registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). This ensures they meet national standards for professional practice and ethics.

Provisional psychologists are registered with AHPRA and are completing supervised practice under an approved supervisor. They provide the same services as psychologists but work under additional oversight to ensure high-quality care. This document includes provisional psychologists when referring to psychologists.

Social workers:

Social workers possess tertiary qualifications in social work and are required to be eligible for membership with the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW).

Services provided

Psychologists and social workers may:

- provide individual or group counselling for mental health, wellbeing, and social issues
- conduct meetings and questionnaires to identify needs (e.g., behavioural, emotional, or social functioning)
- develop and implement strategies with school staff, parent/caregiver and student
- monitor progress and advocate for students in meetings
- support families to understand their child's mental health and wellbeing needs
- liaise with external services and agencies for referrals and coordinated care
- support safety planning for students at risk of harm.

Psychologists and social workers may use different strategies and interventions when working with students and/or their families/carers. They will explain their approach when they meet with you. You are encouraged to ask questions to make informed decisions.

Cultural safety and inclusive practice

The Department of Education (the department) is committed to respecting and incorporating cultural, spiritual and accessibility needs into practice. Please inform the psychologist or social worker of any specific requirements or support needs, such as interpreting, to help in your participation.

Multidisciplinary team discussions

To provide holistic and coordinated support, psychologists and social workers may participate in multidisciplinary team discussions with relevant school staff and professionals (e.g., teachers, wellbeing staff, or therapy and nursing staff) and sometimes regional staff who are involved in supporting the student's educational and wellbeing needs. Information shared will be limited to what is necessary and relevant to the student's support plan.

Consent

Consent is required for a student to access services. If consent has not been provided, the psychologist or social worker will not be able to meet with the student and provide a service.

Consent:

- is usually provided by a student's parent/carer,
- may be provided by the student if the psychologist or social worker, using their professional judgement, has assessed that the student has sufficient maturity and understanding consent may be able to be provided by the student
- must be voluntary, informed, specific and current
- can be withdrawn at any time by notifying the psychologist or social worker and discontinuing service
- must be updated for new referrals or if the service goals change.

Additional consent will be sought for:

- sharing information with external providers
- referring to an external provider
- conducting psychometric assessments and tests (e.g., cognitive, social or emotional tests).

Confidentiality, storage and information sharing

Psychologists and social workers maintain secure records of their work. This includes observations, intervention plans, and sensitive information relevant to the student's wellbeing and support needs, and information provided by external providers (such as GPs, NDIS supports, external support agencies) regarding the student. These records are stored in the department's online student management system (OneSchool) and accessed only by authorised staff.

Further, in some circumstances such as when there are concerns about the student's safety or wellbeing, or when required by law, other departmental officers (such as the principal, members of the school or regional wellbeing teams and principal advisors – student protection) may have access to a psychologist's notes.

In some circumstances, a psychologist or social worker may have to share a student's personal information without their or their parent/carers consent, including when:

- the psychologist or social worker forms a genuine belief that the student or another person may have been harmed or may be at risk of harm
- disclosure of information is required or authorised by law, for example, if information is required to be disclosed under a subpoena or in line with mandatory reporting provisions
- there is suspected unlawful activity or serious misconduct.

There may be circumstances in which a psychologist or social worker may need to store students' confidential personal information in a hard copy file. This will be stored securely in a locked cabinet.

Supervision of practice

Psychologists and social workers engage in regular professional supervision to ensure safe, high-quality care.

Supervision may include:

- discussion of student cases, which occurs within professional ethical guidelines
- review, or co-signing, of case notes or reports to enhance services being provided
- small group supervision discussions regarding de-identified cases
- direct observation or recordings of sessions (with prior consent), with recordings securely stored and deleted after supervision use
- case file reviews as a key component of quality assurance and clinical governance.

University students on placement

As part of their professional training, university students studying psychology or social work may undertake placements in schools under the supervision of qualified psychologists or social workers. These students are required to adhere to strict professional and ethical guidelines, including confidentiality and privacy standards. Consent for university students on placement includes:

- agreement for the university student to observe sessions or participate in service delivery under supervision
- understanding that the university student will not provide unsupervised services to you or your child
- assurance that the university student is bound by the same confidentiality and professional standards as qualified staff.

You may decline consent for a university student on placement to be involved in your or your child's sessions without affecting access to psychology or social work services.

Communication

Psychologists and social workers may use email or SMS for non-urgent matters, such as appointment reminders, session updates, and in-between session practice tasks.

It is important to note that:

- email and SMS is not suitable for emergency, crisis, or highly sensitive issues
- all emails and screenshots of SMS messages are stored in the student's education record (e.g. OneSchool) and may be accessed by authorised department staff
- while steps are taken to protect your information, email and SMS communication carries risks such as the potential for misdirection or unauthorised access.

To ensure effective communication:

- Keep your email address and phone number up to date.
- Use email only for non-urgent matters and avoid including sensitive information in subject lines.
- For urgent or complex issues, contact the psychologist, social worker or school by phone.

Telepractice

Services may be provided via telepractice (e.g., videoconferencing) if deemed appropriate. The psychologist or social worker will send a secure link to a school staff member or your/your child's school email to access telepractice sessions. Telepractice may be facilitated through:

- NeoRehab: An online platform approved for highly sensitive information. More information about NeoRehab is available at <https://www.neorehab.com/>.
- Microsoft Teams: Approved for sensitive information. Due to privacy requirements, the chat function, transcription, recordings of sessions or any artificial intelligence function will not be used during sessions on Microsoft Teams.

Access to student information

Personal information about individuals is managed in accordance with the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* and the *Information Privacy Act 2009*. Requests for access to student information held by schools are dealt with under the [Administrative Access to Information procedure](#). If information is not disclosable via administrative access, then a person may apply for statutory access to the information through the IP Act or RTI Act.

Contact and complaints

If you have questions or concerns about the service, you are encouraged to:

- Speak with the psychologist or social worker first.
- Contact the school principal or the psychologist's or social worker's supervisor.
- Contact the Psychology Board of Australia via <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/> or the Office of the Health Ombudsman for further support.