

School Counselling Services during Home Isolation or School Closure

The government has announced that schools are to remain open, however we acknowledge that many families are choosing to keep their children home.

Our School Counsellors and Psychologists will continue to provide counselling support to students as required during this period of COVID-19 outbreak and will be offering counselling online or over the phone to students who are staying home. This type of remote counselling is referred to as telehealth services.

Appointments will be available within the same time periods as during regular school operating hours (9am – 3pm) and term dates. School Counsellor/Psychologists' days of work are:

Claire Marsh – Monday

Chris Manthey – Monday – Wednesday

Chantelle Manoe – Wednesday - Friday

Students with pre-arranged appointments prior to the closure announcement will be given first priority. New requests will be assessed as to whether the presenting issue and level of associated risk is appropriate to be managed remotely. In the event that the presenting issue needs face-to-face management, a referral to a provider within the community will be suggested. This also applies in the event that a pre-existing client's presentation changes to the extent that remote support is no longer appropriate. *Please note that these providers may be similarly affected by the current public health conditions and a referral is not a guarantee that these providers will be able to see your child.*

How the sessions will work

Students may indicate whether they would prefer a phone call or a video session.

In the event that a phone call is preferred, the student will be asked to provide a contact number. The phone call will be made from a private number or the school landline, so if the call is missed by the student they may not be able to return the call. Instead, the Counsellor or Psychologist will make another attempt to call the student after a few minutes. If the student is no longer able to take the call at the designated time, renegotiation of a time can occur via email. Similarly, the School Counsellor or Psychologist will advise a student as soon as practical if they are no longer able to connect at the pre-arranged time.

If students would prefer a video session, the school counsellor or psychologist will connect with the student via Zoom at the time advised in the meeting invitation (sent via email). Your child will need to have access to a Zoom account on a device that they can use in a private location at home. Zoom is a free service for one-to-one video calls, and the usual 40 minute limitation on the free account has been lifted. You DO NOT need to purchase the pro account. As with phone calls, if the student does not accept the video connection at the agreed time, another attempt will be made to connect after a few minutes. Visit <https://zoom.us/> to sign up for a free Zoom account.

Students (and parents of Junior School students) will be advised as to privacy and confidentiality considerations (see below) and encouraged to take the call or video conference in a private location. Many families have rules at home about phones and devices in bedrooms or other private places, so this will need to be discussed with your child in the event that they choose to access counselling support remotely.

The sessions are not allowed to be recorded at any time without permission. If your child is consulting with a Provisional Psychologist or Trainee Counsellor, sessions may need to be recorded for the purpose of supervision. Consent is required for this to happen, so please indicate on the consent form whether you agree.

Making an appointment

Remote counselling appointment times can be arranged via direct email request to the School Counselling Team: counsellor@macarthur.adventist.edu.au. Once your request has been received the School Counsellor or Psychologist will make contact with you or your child to arrange a Zoom or phone session.

Once the time is arranged, middle and senior school students 14 years and older will receive an appointment invitation via their school email. Any real-time school lessons scheduled will take precedence as much as possible.

For Junior School students, the Counsellor or Psychologist will negotiate an appropriate time with a parent or guardian, who will then support their children to access the session. If a parent is not available and a child is being cared for by another family member (such as a responsible older sibling, other relative or family friend), we will ask permission to liaise with the person who will be supporting the child during their session.

As always, our School Counsellors and Psychologists are available to support parents and guardians in regard to their children's wellbeing. Parents and guardians may also request a call or video conference via the above email address.

Dealing with COVID-19: Resources for Families

How parents can talk to kids about the coronavirus (video)

https://kilvington.vic.schooltv.me/wellbeing_news/special-report-coronavirus

How to talk to kids about COVID-19

<https://theconversation.com/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-covid-19-133576>

Tips from the Australian Psychological Society for coping with coronavirus anxiety

<https://www.psychology.org.au/getmedia/38073179-4701-48bd-afd9-988c560ee2f9/20APS-IS-COVID-19-P1.pdf?>

This is a printable PDF book written for younger children

https://www.mindheart.co/descargables?fbclid=IwAR0--wtczsF2OodUPcHve9Mnyh9VJuGMzk6cviSdxtJqZZdDlOJHn7_caJQ

This website has a range of resources on coping with anxiety, meditations and podcast discussions

<https://www.tenpercent.com/coronavirussanityguide?>

Spiritual resources and links to live-stream church

<http://www.digitaldisciples.info/covid-19-digital-discipleship-resources/>

These services all provide counselling by phone and via text chat:

Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800
<https://kidshelpline.com.au/get-help/webchat-counselling>

Headspace <https://headspace.org.au/eheadspace/>

Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636
<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/national-help-lines-and-websites>

Lifeline 13 11 14
<https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

IMPORTANT: STUDENTS AND PARENTS/GUARDIANS PLEASE READ BEFORE CONSENTING TO REMOTE TELEHEALTH COUNSELLING

Remote Counselling: Some Things to Consider

Privacy

Make sure you are in a private place for your session. Your Counsellor or Psychologist will take reasonable steps at their end to protect your privacy but you have responsibility to ensure your privacy at your end. Make sure that you are in a place where others cannot hear your conversation or see your screen. If this is difficult to ensure, please let your Counsellor or Psychologist know. It can help to have headphones available for greater privacy.

Be mindful that your School Counsellor or Psychologist may also be working from another location outside of the school and may not have access to your physical file notes. Notes are likely to be stored electronically when working from a remote location, however your Counsellor or Psychologist will follow their guidelines to ensure the privacy of your information.

Distractions

Please minimize distractions during your session. This includes not playing games, sending messages, or other activities during your session. Treat your counselling appointment as you would a face-to-face session; your Counsellor or Psychologist will do likewise.

Confidentiality and safety

In the event that the school Counsellor or Psychologist is concerned about your safety or the safety of another student, the usual limitations around confidentiality exist (as set out in the school's standard consent form and policies). Information regarding risk and safety will be shared with an adult or other suitable professional who is able to monitor your safety, or the safety of the student concerned.

Students above the age of 14 and deemed able to give their own consent for counselling: Where appropriate and where you feel safe to do so, we encourage you to talk to your parents/guardians and inform them of what you are undertaking and ask them for their support. They will be receiving this information so they are aware that remote counselling may happen at home. It is important that, as far as is possible and reasonable, a parent or guardian responsible for your care on the day of the telehealth consultation is aware that you are receiving this service in their home.

Your school Counsellor or Psychologist will ask you to provide the address of your location at the time of the telehealth consultation, and ask you the name and contact number of 2 adults that are available and responsible for your care on that day.

Appropriate Dress/Setting

If you are accessing a video service, then you will agree that the video will be set in such a way that the frame will only include the head and top half of your torso (as if sitting at a desk), wearing appropriate clothing (follow the schools' 'Free dress' policy - no pyjamas, no revealing clothing, no obscenities) in front of an appropriate background (no negative or offensive imagery).

The services that we will be offering whilst the school is closed will only be available during that time. Once the school re-opens we will revert to our normal practices.

If you are in agreement with all of the above, please complete the attached consent form and return to the school. If you are unable to return the physical form due to home isolation, please scan or photograph and send to counsellor@macarthur.adventist.edu.au.

Please remember that school counselling is short term, generally between 6 to 10 sessions. It is solution focused in order to assist you with your individual needs at a school level and is not designed as primary care for more complex issues or those requiring extended treatment. Where necessary, we may suggest you seek external professional therapy and ongoing support services such as a private Psychologist, GP or other professional health services. As part of our service, we will continue to offer support to those seeking external care and liaise with providers as needed.

Together we have your best interests as a priority and our support is reflective of MAC values.

Please contact us if you have any further questions or concerns that you would like to discuss.

Yours sincerely,

The Counselling and Psychology Team
Macarthur Adventist College

Online Zoom Guidelines for Students

The same principles apply for counselling when using audio/video as when we meet face to face. ***Pretend that you are attending a session in the counselling room at school.*** We've included this information below as a reminder of some guidelines and expectations to consider prior to your telehealth appointment:

- You have the choice of which method of contact you are most comfortable with - either video or audio. Let your Counsellor or Psychologist know your preference.
- At any time you can let your Counsellor or Psychologist know that you wish to turn off the video option and continue with audio only.
- Try to find a location that is private so that you won't be interrupted. Be mindful of what you are talking about and whether you want other people to be able to hear the conversation, particularly if you are not using headphones.
- Think about whether anyone else is present in the room or within ear-shot. You are responsible for ensuring your own privacy on your end of the telehealth call.
- Let your Counsellor or Psychologist know what you would like to have happen if there is an unexpected interruption. They can protect your privacy by turning off their video feed as soon as they are aware of another person being present in the room. They will check with you when you are comfortable to continue and resume the video feed.
- Your Counsellor or Psychologist will ask you to provide your physical location (address) at the time of the telehealth call, and the name and contact numbers of 2 adults who are responsible for your care on that day.
- Video should be framed from desktop height and above and not have any personal items in view that you would not want others to see. No laying down on your bed or similar while on video.
- Wear clothes that would be appropriate for school (i.e. modest clothing in line with the school's 'Free Dress' Policy).
- Never record the conversation without permission.
- Use headphones with a microphone to improve sound quality and to improve your privacy.
- Make sure the lighting is ok so you can be clearly seen.
- Your Counsellor or Psychologist has the right to discontinue or reschedule a telehealth counselling session at any time if they deem it to be inappropriate to continue for any reason. You also have the right to discontinue or reschedule a telehealth counselling session, please discuss this with your school Counsellor or Psychologist if needed.
- In the event that your Counsellor or Psychologist identifies a significant risk of harm to your safety or the safety of someone around you, they will follow the school's policy to call an agreed-upon contact person who is responsible for the care of the student that day, or emergency services as soon as possible.

REMOTE SCHOOL COUNSELLING SERVICES CONSENT FORM

This form is additional to student/parent consent forms for School Counselling and Psychology Services at Macarthur Adventist College, and a comprehensive information sheet about remote school counselling services has been provided along with this consent form.

Remote telehealth counselling services involve the use of electronic communications to enable your school Counsellors and Psychologists to provide services when face-to-face appointments are not able to be provided due to COVID-19 protocols.

Expected Benefits

- Improved access to care by enabling a student to access the School Counsellor or Psychologist while they are unable to attend school due to COVID-19 protocols.
- Research shows that psychological services still have good effect when delivered via telehealth services. The impact of social isolation on mental health can be reduced.
- Electronic systems used will incorporate network and software security protocols to protect confidentiality and safeguard data against intentional or unintentional corruption.

Risks

- I understand that a video consultation will not be exactly the same and may not be as complete as a face-to-face service.
- There could be some technical problems that affect the telehealth visit, and there are unique factors to consider in maintaining privacy.
- The school uses systems that meet recommended standards to protect privacy and security (Zoom, email and phone calls). However, the service cannot guarantee total protection against hacking or tapping into the virtual visit by others.

I understand that:

- I can change my mind and stop using telehealth consultations at any time, including in the middle of a visit. I have the right to turn off the video option at any time and continue the session via audio only.
 - I am responsible for ensuring my/my child's own privacy on my end of the telehealth call.
 - I can expect the School Counsellor or Psychologist to be in a private environment, free from distractions and other people, for my privacy.
 - The usual limits to confidentiality apply (as set out in the school's counselling guidelines)
- If my child is consulting with a Provisional Psychologist or a Trainee Counsellor, sessions may be recorded for supervision purposes. (Please tick the box if you agree)

By signing, I am agreeing that I have read the information sheet on remote school counselling services and I understand the risks and benefits involved. I agree to remote consultations with the School Counsellor or Psychologist from Macarthur Adventist College.

.....
Name of Student.....

Student's signature.....

Date:.....

Name of Parent

Parent's signature

Date:.....

(relationship to child)