



Students at risk (nonsuicidal self injury/self-harm and/or suicidal ideation) policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Mandatory Reporting policy and relates to students at the Rosalind Park campus of Bendigo Senior Secondary College. The NETschool campus follows the NETschool protocols in managing students at risk.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students at risk (nonsuicidal self injury/self-harm and/or suicide ideation) are managed in a coordinated, consistent and safe manner.

2. Definitions

Nonsuicidal self injury/self harm: nonsuicidal self injury (also referred to as self harm) is the deliberate injuring of oneself without suicidal intent.

Suicidal ideation: suicidal ideation is a medical term used to describe suicidal thoughts or plans.

Student at risk: for the purpose of this policy, a student at risk is any student who speaks of wanting to end their life, has deliberately harmed themselves in some way, is displaying signs of psychosis or has indicated that they are planning to hurt themselves or others.

Staff: includes all teaching and Education Support (ES) staff employed by Bendigo Senior Secondary College and visiting teacher or Student Support Services Officers (SSSO) DET staff.

Principal's delegate: for the purpose of this policy, this refers to the Assistant Principal – Student Engagement, Wellbeing and International Programs or Student Wellbeing Manager.

3. Procedures

3.1 Confidentiality

Where a student discloses sensitive information and wishes for this to remain confidential, this will be respected where possible. However all staff have a duty to inform a student that confidentiality will be breached if they become concerned for the student's safety or the safety of others. All student consultations with a Student Wellbeing Advisor begin with a disclaimer explaining this.

Sensitive information will be shared with staff on a 'need-to-know' basis; eg. "John is experiencing personal difficulties", but not necessarily the details.

All Bendigo Senior Secondary College staff must abide by the following confidentiality requirements:

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Person Responsible: Student Wellbeing Manager

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- Subpoena – if a staff member is subpoenaed, they must breach confidentiality;
- Mental Health Act – if required by the Mental Health Act, confidentiality must be breached;
- Duty to warn – if another person is in danger, confidentiality must be breached to warn that person;
- Safety of a student – if a student’s life is at risk, confidentiality must be breached to notify parents or carers;
- Disclosure to police about a crime disclosed in the context of therapy if the crime involves immediate danger to a student’s life;
- **Confidentiality** – *for all of the above, confidentiality must be breached, regardless of the student’s age.*

3.2 Identification and management of a student at risk

This section should be read in conjunction with **Appendix 1 - Responding to an instance of a student at risk.**

Where a staff member deems a student’s safety to be compromised, the student has disclosed intent to self-harm or suicide, has revealed an episode of self-harm (or the staff member witnesses recent evidence of this), or is otherwise considered to be ‘at risk’, the staff member must report this to a Student Wellbeing Advisor or a member of the Leadership Team. It is highly recommended that the staff member informs the student that this disclosure is about to occur. If the staff member cannot leave the student, they should send another member of staff to take this message to a Student Wellbeing Advisor or a member of the Leadership Team.

If the student is not deemed to be at risk, this will be reported back to the original source of the referral and the Student Wellbeing Advisor will clearly document the process that has been followed.

If the student is deemed at risk, the Student Wellbeing Advisor will notify the student’s parent or carer and the Principal or Principal’s delegate. Permission will be sought from the student to inform the parent or carer, however confidentiality will be breached if this is not forthcoming. The parent or carer will be informed of the situation and asked to collect the student from the college immediately. Advice will be given to the parent or carer about the most appropriate way to proceed and if necessary, a medical clearance and return to school plan may be requested in order for the student to return to the college. The Student Wellbeing Advisor will clearly document the process that has been followed and provide details to the student’s Advisor and Coordinator.

If a parent or carer cannot be contacted, emergency contacts will be tried. If this is also unsuccessful, the Student Wellbeing Advisor will seek advice from the Principal or Principal’s delegate about how to proceed, however in most cases, the police will be notified with a request to escort the student to the Accident and Emergency Department at Bendigo Health. The Student Wellbeing Advisor will clearly document the process that has been followed. Psychiatric Services Triage advice will be sought and notified prior to the arrival of the student.

If the student discloses, or if it is known that the student is already seeing a mental health professional, they will be notified.

If the belief is formed that the parent or carer will not adequately support the student, it may be necessary to make a Mandatory Report (see Mandatory Reporting policy) or refer the matter to the police. The Principal or Principal delegate should always be consulted prior to initiating this step.

3.3 Managing instances of nonsuicidal self injury/self harm

As instances of nonsuicidal self injury/self harm can be incredibly varied, it is difficult to have a “one size fits all” approach so staff are advised to always consult the Principal or Principal’s delegate if in doubt about how to proceed.

All instances of self-harm (disclosed or witnessed) should be referred to a Student Wellbeing Advisor or a member of the Leadership team, as outlined in section 3.2.

The student will be seen by a Student Wellbeing Advisor to complete a risk assessment. If instances of nonsuicidal self injury/self harm or concerns about suicidal ideation are identified by a visiting professional (ie DET social worker or psychologist, GP, Mental Health Nurse, Youth Health Nurse or counsellor), the professional will

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undertake a full risk assessment in consultation with the Wellbeing Advisor to determine the appropriate response.

The Student Wellbeing Advisor (where relevant in conjunction with the DET Social Worker, psychologist, GP, Mental Health Nurse, Youth Health Nurse or counsellor) will complete a risk assessment and decide on the following:

- If the student presents with evidence of very low level, superficial cuts, they will not need to breach confidentiality. The student will be strongly encouraged to give permission for their parent or carer to be advised to ensure that the parent or carer can provide appropriate support for the student.
- If the student presents with more serious cuts or injuries where these injuries can be associated with recent self-harm, requiring first aid/medical attention, they have self-harmed in the past and/or they are showing signs of escalation, confidentiality will be breached.

If a student requires treatment from a First Aid Officer or another member of BSSC staff, then this is considered first aid/medical attention, and confidentiality will be breached.

Due to the possible contagious effect of self-harm, students with any recent visible nonsuicidal self injury/self harm injuries will be advised to have injuries covered while at school.

3.4 Managing instances of suicidal ideation

If a student reveals *current* thoughts or plans to end their life and is deemed to be threatening to hurt or kill themselves, looking for ways to kill themselves, seeking access to pills, weapons or other means or talking or writing about death, dying or suicide, the student's parent or carer will be notified. The student will be encouraged to give permission for this to occur, however if this is not forthcoming, then confidentiality will be breached.

If the student is enrolled as an independent student, their emergency contact person will be notified. Where there is no nominated emergency contact the following will occur:

- Discussion with the student regarding a key support person who can provide them with immediate support;
- The nominated support person will be notified and a support plan negotiated;
- If no nominated support person is identified, consultation will occur with the Principal or Principal's delegate regarding the most appropriate steps to undertake to ensure the student's immediate safety and wellbeing needs are able to be addressed.

If a student reveals thoughts or plans to end their life that have occurred in the past, the Student Wellbeing Advisor will complete a risk assessment. If the risk is deemed to be non-existent or very low, then confidentiality will not be breached, however the student will be encouraged to give permission to share this information with their parent or carer. If the risk is deemed moderate to high, confidentiality will be breached, and the details outlined in 3.2 will be followed. The Student Wellbeing Advisor will document the process that has been followed.

3.5 Managing the return to school of a student at risk

In keeping with usual practice, all students with ongoing mental health issues will be referred to an outside agency for their care and treatment. Returning the student to school will have a "shared care" approach between the student, the parent or carer, the college, external supporting agencies and other relevant medical professionals.

A "return to school plan" will always be requested (and at the Principal's discretion, may be required) by the college from the treating external agency. This should outline the best approach to transitioning the student back into their studies. The college will make allowances permissible by the VCAA to support the student's successful completion of course requirements on return to school.

A meeting between all key stakeholders, including the student's Learning and Engagement Coordinator, will take place prior to the student returning to the college. The student's teachers will be informed of information on a "need to know" basis and will be provided with strategies to best support the student's return to the classroom.

Parents or carers will be advised that if permission is not given for the college to communicate with the treating external agency or other medical practitioner, this may delay the student's return to the college.

Where the student is deemed as being independent and responsible for their own care, they will be encouraged to invite a support person to any meeting. Independent students will be responsible for granting permission as their own carer.

4. Expectations of staff at BSSC when responding to a student at risk situation

4.1 BSSC capacity to support students at risk

The role of Bendigo Senior Secondary College is to manage immediate situations, make referrals to external agencies and support the educational needs of the student. Any student presenting with significant mental health issues and/or requiring ongoing support or treatment will be referred to an external agency. The college will work with this agency to best support the educational needs and wellbeing of the student.

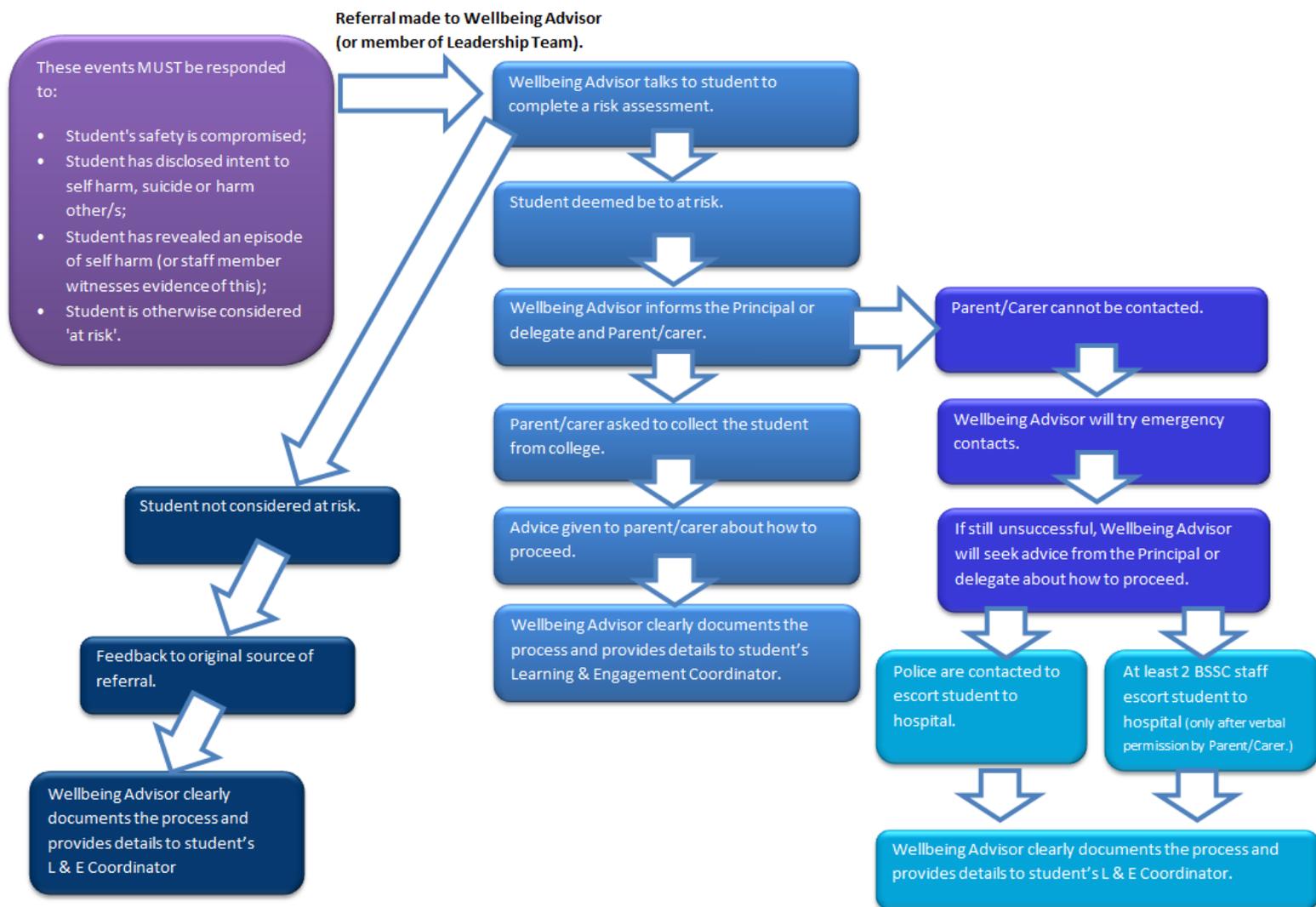
4.2 Student and parent or carer contact with BSSC staff about students at risk

Student Wellbeing Advisors and other staff with college issued mobile phones may provide these numbers to students and parents or carers but the student, parent or carer will be made aware that any communication to these devices will only be received during college hours (eg. 8.30am-4.30pm, Monday to Friday, during school terms).

There is no expectation that a BSSC staff member will respond to any form of electronic communication, including email, voicemail, SMS etc. outside of school hours.

In the case of urgent communication, parents, carers, students and concerned staff are advised to contact BSSC reception to speak directly to the relevant staff member.

Appendix 1 - Responding to an instance of a student at risk



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