

Informed Consent Policy

The current Alphington Grammar School (AGS) Informed Consent Policy commences on 1st January 2021 and replaces all previous AGS Psychology consent forms and policies. The policy is subject to revision by AGS on a regular basis and any future amendments to the form will be communicated as soon as practicable to the School community.

1. Purpose:

- 1.1. Alphington Grammar School is committed to providing a caring and supportive environment for all students and their families, as well as to all staff.
- 1.2. The School Psychology service is provided onsite at AGS, and exists to provide counselling and assessment services to support students to both maximise their wellbeing at school, and maximise their academic flourishing.
- 1.3. School psychology services may include:
 - direct evidence-based psychotherapy/counselling with students;
 - cognitive and academic/learning based assessments;
 - social, emotional and behavioural assessments;
 - consultation with teachers, educational support staff and AGS leadership;
 - consultation with parents/caregivers; and
 - implementing schoolwide wellbeing programs.

2. Referral to the AGS Psychology service and informed consent:

- 2.1. Students may self-refer to the AGS Psychology service, or they may be referred via the AGS Pastoral Leadership Team. Parents/caregivers may also contact the school to request psychological services.
- 2.2. This document serves as informed consent for parents/caregivers of students regarding the AGS Psychology service.
- 2.3. A brief and age appropriate informed consent form will be provided to students who engage with the service which contains information about the service, limits to confidentiality, and record keeping.
- 2.4. AGS has implemented an '**Opt-Out Consent Policy**' with regard to services provided through the AGS Psychology service, meaning that **if you do not wish your child to receive psychological services; you must inform the School either verbally or in writing**. Consent for services provided by the AGS Psychology service is entirely voluntary, and consent may be withdrawn at any time either verbally or in writing.
- 2.5. If a student and/or their parent/caregiver is considering withdrawing their consent for services, it is recommended that a discussion be held first with the School Psychologist and other relevant AGS staff. If, at a future date the services of the School Psychologist are required, a new referral may be made and a consent form will be given to the student and/or their parent/caregiver to sign.
- 2.6. Students who are 16 years and older may legally self-consent to receiving services through the AGS Psychology service without their parent's knowledge or consent. In Australia a young person is considered capable of legally providing informed consent when he or she "achieves a sufficient understanding and intelligence to enable him or her to understand fully what is proposed".
- 2.7. Parents/caregivers of students who are younger than 16 will be contacted by the School Psychologist to discuss the reason for referral. If however, the student who is younger than 16 specifically requests that their parents/caregivers not be informed of their engagement with the AGS Psychology service; a determination will be made by the School Psychologist as to that student's capacity to provide informed consent.
- 2.8. Where a conflict of interest exists between students and their parents/caregivers, the School Psychologist will act in the student's best interests.

3. Collection of information:

- 3.1. A file will be established for all students engaged with the AGS Psychology service. This file will contain all relevant information pertaining to the student and may include; case notes, reports, assessment materials, recommendations, important communications, and any other relevant information gathered during the provision of service. All information gathered about your child will remain confidential, except where the sharing of information is consented to by the student and/or parent/caregiver or, is deemed necessary and/or legally required as per the *Privacy information* section of this document. Only the School Psychologist will have access to the AGS Psychology department files. The student and their parent/caregiver/legal guardian may request access to their file.
- 3.2. All confidential AGS Psychology Department files remain the property of AGS and will be archived until the child is 25 years of age, at which time the file will be destroyed.

4. Privacy information:

- 4.1. The School Psychologist may request personal information about the student and their family including health information to clarify what support may be required. Information may be requested from the School staff along with information from any relevant external service providers. Where relevant, in order for the School Psychologist to contact and exchange information with external health services or other support service providers; a 'Release of Information' form will be provided to the student or their parent/caregiver to be signed.
- 4.2. Information may be shared with other AGS staff in circumstances where it is deemed necessary or appropriate. The sharing of information between School Psychologists, School Nurse, Teachers, Educational Support staff, AGS Leadership and (where appropriate) other professionals, helps provide a more co-ordinated and well informed approach to supporting students at AGS. The sharing of information may involve both verbal discussions and the exchange of written materials. Any information shared will be on a strictly 'need to know' basis for the purpose of providing appropriate support to students.
- 4.3. All psychological assessment materials relating to a student will remain confidential. The School Psychologist may however, share a summary report of any relevant assessment results with other school staff for the purpose of making appropriate adjustments for the student according to their individual profile of strengths and difficulties.
- 4.4. If you wish to provide information or materials to the Psychology Department that you do not want shared with other school staff, you must inform the School Psychologist.
- 4.5. Throughout the provision of service, the School Psychologist may consult with other supervising Psychologists to ensure that you and/or your child are provided with optimal support. All Psychologists are bound by ethical codes designed to protect confidentiality.

5. Disclosure of personal information:

- 5.1. Personal student information gathered by the AGS Psychology Department during the provision of service will remain confidential, except where:
 - the AGS Psychology Department student file is subpoenaed by an Australian court;
 - disclosure of student information is otherwise required by Australian law;
 - AGS is required to provided data to the *National Count of Students with Disabilities (NCCD)*, see; <https://www.nccd.edu.au/>

- failure to disclose information would in the reasonable belief of the School Psychologist place the student or another person at serious risk to life, health, or safety;
- the Psychologist forms a reasonable belief that a serious crime, or misconduct of a serious nature has been committed and believes that disclosure is necessary for appropriate action to be taken; and
- the student and/or their parent/caregiver's consent has been obtained to:
 - provide a report or other written material to another professional or agency
 - discuss student information with another professional or agency
 - disclose student information in another way.

6. Limitations to service:

- 6.1. While the AGS Psychology service is available to all students, the School Psychologist in consultation with AGS Leadership staff reserve the right to exercise limitations to the service.
- 6.2. The range of assessments conducted, and/or the number of counselling sessions provided to a student is at the discretion of the School Psychologist in consultation with AGS Leadership staff.
- 6.3. Where deemed necessary, a referral to an external psychological/mental health service, or other allied health or medical service provider will be discussed with the student and/or their parents/caregivers.
- 6.4. Limitations to the school psychology service may be exercised in the following situations:
 - it is deemed that a student is presenting with psychological issues that are acute or ongoing to the extent that a referral to an external Psychological/mental health service, or other support service provider is warranted;
 - it is deemed that a student is misusing the service (i.e. presenting to the School Psychology office to avoid class or other school commitments); and
 - it is deemed that a psychological assessment may be beyond the scope of the AGS Psychology Department or would be otherwise more appropriately administered by an external Psychological/mental health service, or other allied health or medical service provider.

7. Emergency assistance:

- 7.1. Please note, the AGS Psychology service is not an emergency service, if you require urgent mental health support, please take one of the following courses of action:
 - Call Triple 000; or
 - take your child to your nearest hospital's Accident and Emergency service.
- 7.2. For crisis counselling, call:
 - Lifeline 13 11 14 (Australia-wide);
 - SuicideLine 1300 651 251 (Victoria only); and
 - Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800.