

POLICY

CHAPLAINCY SERVICES IN SCHOOLS

Responsibility of: School Support Services
Effective Date: December 2014
Next Review Date: December 2016
Target Audience: All departmental staff

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1. This document should be read in conjunction with the:

- Chaplaincy Services in Schools guidelines
- National School Chaplaincy Programme (NSCP) 2015 – 2018 Northern Territory General Information

2. POLICY

Schools in the Northern Territory (NT) may, after appropriate consultation with their school community, appoint a chaplain to support the provision of pastoral care and emotional wellbeing programs. Other than Australian Government funding distributed by the department through the NSCP, appointment of a chaplain must be at no cost to the department.

All school chaplains must, at no cost to the school/department, be subject to a criminal history check and satisfy the departmental requirements for working with children. Qualified school chaplains must agree to adhere to the Code of Conduct for School Chaplains and, in conjunction with their Employing Agency, enter into a Deed of Agreement with the NT and the relevant school council.

The school principal is responsible for the day-to-day management of the chaplain and for the development and implementation of a risk management plan.

Chaplains may participate in general school activities. However, prior to engaging a chaplain in these activities, consideration must be given to whether their involvement could be more appropriately undertaken by a parent volunteer.

Services offered by chaplains

In addition to being recognised through formal ordination, commissioning, recognised religious qualifications or endorsement by a recognised or accepted religious institution and having a current NT Working with Children Clearance, Chaplains must meet the following minimum qualifications:

- a Certificate IV in Youth Work; or
- a Certificate IV in Pastoral Care; or
- an equivalent qualification as approved by School Support Services (contact policy.decs@nt.gov.au for more information)

The services provided by the chaplain must be consistent with their qualifications and must not extend to other service areas, in particular but not limited to, teaching or counselling. Under no circumstances can the school's duty of care for students be delegated to the chaplain.

Student participation in any specialised programs or support services offered by the chaplain must operate as an opt-in arrangement at all times. This includes activities that may be led by other school staff with support from the chaplain.

Parents must be provided with written information about the role of the chaplain in the school and the opt-in chaplaincy program. Parents must provide written consent for their child to participate in the chaplaincy program if students are to participate.

Parents must be provided with the opportunity to review consent for their child to participate in services offered by the chaplain annually, and when there is a change to the chaplain or their program of services. Parental permission must be recorded on up-to-date class and whole school registers through the Student Administration Management System (SAMS) and with hard copies retained as per the department's General Disposal Schedule for School Records and Storage Procedural Guidelines.

Students with parental permission to participate in services offered by the chaplain should be removed from class to attend the respective sessions. Schools should schedule these sessions in consideration of student educational needs.

All services offered by the chaplain must be conducted in an appropriate environment where a staff member is able to observe what occurs.

One-on-one services offered by chaplains

Student safety and duty of care obligations are paramount when determining whether one-on-one chaplaincy services will be offered as part of the chaplain's role in a school. Provision of one-on-one chaplaincy services requires:

- the written approval of both the principal and parent in each case
- a venue on school premises where school staff are able to observe the conduct of a one-on-one session
- appropriate records of the session to be created and filed on the school's file for the student.

Records of one-on-one sessions must include details of:

- who was involved
- where and when the session took place
- what the main topics of discussion were and any outcomes.

If these requirements are not able to be met, one-on-one chaplaincy services must not be offered as part of the chaplain's role in the school.

3. BUSINESS NEED

This policy is required to ensure and support all NT Government (NTG) schools to appropriately and consistently plan and implement school chaplaincy programs in particular the Australian Government funded NSCP.

A chaplain is an optional addition to a school's wellbeing service and should complement the other student support services provided by the school.

Chaplains will undertake specific roles within a school. In addition to delivering specialised programs and support services, they may participate in and provide support for general school activities as appropriate.

4. SCOPE

This policy applies to all NTG schools, including Independent Public Schools.

Non-government schools accessing funding through the NSCP must agree to the conditions set out with the NT National School Chaplaincy Programme Information Pack.

5 RELATED POLICY, LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

Departmental	Code of Conduct for School Chaplains in Northern Territory Schools Complaints webpage Criminal History Checks working with children clearance notices (Ochre Card) Safeguarding the wellbeing of children – Obligations for the mandatory reporting of harm and exploitation policy General Principles for Selecting Suitable Resources in Schools (link for staff only) Deed of Agreement for Chaplaincy Services in Northern Territory Schools General Disposal Schedule for School Records and Storage Procedural Guidelines (link for staff only)
Northern Territory	Care and Protection of Children Act Care and Protection of Children (Children’s Services) Regulations Information Act Anti-Discrimination Act Ombudsman NT Effective Complaints Management Fact Sheets
National	Australian Government’s National School Chaplaincy Programme Project Agreement

6 EVALUATION

School Support Services will, in collaboration with the regions and schools, evaluate the application and effectiveness of the policy on a two yearly basis using quantitative and qualitative data (including feedback from stakeholders) analysis.

Executive Directors (North and South), Regional Directors and Principals are responsible for ensuring policy compliance and ongoing evaluation of performance at the operational level.