

BANNED SUBSTANCES POLICY

RATIONALE

At Mercy Regional College we strive to foster a culture that encourages the development of self-assured, critical thinking young people and a community where relationships are based upon the core values of care, justice and respect. Mercy Regional College is committed to learning, to the care of others, to forming character and to building a supportive community where individuals are accountable for their own behaviour. Partnerships exist and are valued between school, home and the community.

Drug usage, dependency and associated issues and actions can put the individual and our community at risk. We seek to minimize potential or actual drug-related harm through appropriate whole school education, action and response. The use of illegal drugs and the abuse of drugs of any kind are not condoned by the Mercy Regional College Community.

This policy aims to ensure that all members of our College Community adopt a balanced and consistent approach to educating and responding to drug usage by students and drug-related issues.

At all times the College aims to provide care for individual students and protection for all involved in the College Community.

DEFINITIONS

Drugs: Any substance, with the exception of food and water, which, when taken into the body, alters its function physically and/or psychologically. This includes all legal and illegal substances.

Drugs can be broadly defined in four categories:

- **Depressants:** Sedatives that affect the central nervous system. They slow down nerve messages between the brain and body. e.g. Alcohol, cannabis and opiates.
- **Stimulants:** These drugs speed up nerve messages between the brain and the body. e.g. Nicotine, amphetamines, cocaine, cannabis and ecstasy.
- **Hallucinogens:** These drugs have the ability to distort how a person senses their surroundings. e.g. Cannabis, ecstasy and LSD.
- **Miscellaneous:** This definition includes all drugs of dependence. e.g. Some prescription or over the counter medications, tobacco, steroids, amphetamines as well as solvents, which may be inhaled.

Illicit drug: A drug of which the production, sale, possession or use is prohibited. An alternative term is 'illegal drug'.

Unsanctioned drug: A drug for which use is restricted by law, school authorities and/or school policies/guidelines. The term includes illicit, social and prescription drugs.

Drug-related incident: An occasion involving alcohol, tobacco and/or other illicit or unsanctioned drug use and/or the possession of a drug or drug-related equipment (except for legal medical use).

Drug-related issues: All issues associated with drugs, including those that arise from personal use and use by another person or persons.

Supply: Refers to incidents involving supplying, sharing, distributing or selling of drugs.

School drug education: Refers to and encompasses all policies, practices, programs and initiatives/events in the school connected with the prevention and reduction of drug-related harm.

Prevention: The strategies used to prevent drug use from occurring at all or to delay the onset of use.

Intervention: The strategies implemented when responding to drug related issues.

Possession: Occupying or holding a substance either with or without rights of ownership.'

College Environment: The College environment refers to school buildings and grounds and official school activities. This includes retreats, camps, school trips and other overnight excursions. Students travelling to and from these venues and/or school activities are expected to observe school policies. College activities do not include any private parties or functions, responsibility for which rests with parents.

Harm Minimisation: Harm minimisation refers to policies and programs aimed at reducing drug-related harm, which includes the promotion of abstinence, prevention of anticipated harm, and reduction of actual harm.

Restorative Practice: Restorative practice is a strategy that seeks to repair relationships that have been damaged. It does this by bringing about a sense of remorse and restorative action on the part of the offender and forgiveness by the victim/s.

Positive Education: Positive education is an approach to education that draws on positive psychology's emphasis of individual strengths and personal motivation to promote learning. Nurturing a positive climate and relationships across the school community is fundamental to addressing drug-related harm for young people.

POLICY STATEMENT

Mercy Regional College has adopted the principles of the Catholic Education Ballarat (CEOB) Policy

"The church teaches that parents, social workers, priests, religious and laity are witnesses and the first protagonists in trying to understand, intervene and propose to individuals an alternative to drug dependency. The family is one of the first places for this to happen, however, it cannot do so in isolation from the parish, the community or the work of education."

This policy assists Mercy regional College to comply with this understanding and fulfil its role in reducing the harm that can arise from drug use. All people working in schools have a responsibility to care for children, to promote their well-being and to protect them from any form of harm. In keeping with the CEOB guidelines, the College will enact policy and strategies that encompass health promotion initiatives, positive education approaches, age-appropriate drug education programs based on a harm minimisation approach and agreed and understood procedures for responding to drug related issues.

- Mercy Regional College requests all staff, parents and visitors to act as role models for our students.
- Smoking is not permitted within the College environment at any time by students, staff, members of the College Community or visitors to our College.
- Students may not be in possession of, under the influence of or consume or supply alcohol to other students within the College environment or on external College events such as camps, retreats, immersion trips. Should any student be in possession of a banned substance on camps or school trip parents will be contacted to come and collect their child.
- Consumption of alcohol at College functions such as Year 12 Dinner deems students to be under parental supervision.
- The consumption of alcohol by any other member of the Mercy Regional College Community is permitted within the College environment only in prescribed circumstances as outlined in the Mercy Regional College Alcohol Policy. The determination as to whether alcohol may be consumed on a particular occasion or at a function is to be made by the Principal.
- The possession of, use of, or dealing in illicit or unsanctioned drugs is not permitted at any time within the College environment by students, staff, parents or any members of the public, including those using/hiring any College facilities.

Prevention programs and strategies

A whole school approach to drug education encompasses formal teaching and learning programs and informal curriculum and culture, student well-being and pastoral care programs, school ethos and values, interpersonal relationships and effective partnerships with parents and services in the wider community. These should provide students with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will assist them to develop their problem solving,

decision making, assertiveness and help seeking skills in relation to drug use. This whole school approach provides a systematic and practical framework, which the College can use to manage drug related issues and to ensure that the well-being and individual needs of all students is supported.

Harm Minimisation: Harm minimisation programs at Mercy Regional College aim to encourage abstinence, prevent anticipated harm, and promote safer drug use.

The College aims to provide students with a comprehensive education about drug issues.

The Drug Education Program is cross curricular and includes teaching and learning specific to drugs. Drug issues are addressed in a variety of learning areas with different topics at different Year Levels to focus on the needs of the students that are relevant to their maturation level. Topics are designed to include factual information about drugs, allowing for a discussion of individual and community attitudes to drug use as well as taking into account the environment of the students and the reasons students may be likely to use drugs.

The Mercy Regional College Drug Education approach fosters the notion that drug education is a shared responsibility between home, the College and the community.

- Year 7 - Alcohol and Tobacco, Depressants, Stimulants, Prescription Drugs, Inhalants, Analgesics, Hallucinogens, help seeking.
- Year 8 - Decision making, self-confidence, peer relationships, responsibility.
- Year 9 – The Dangers of alcohol and drugs, First Aid and CPR.
- Year 10 – Positive relationships and strategies to deal with challenging and unsafe situations
- Year 11 - Fit 2 Drive,
- Year 12 – Red Frogs, RSA course offered to Year 12 students

Intervention programs and strategies

The College aims to provide a safe environment conducive to individual and/or group education for members of the College Community.

We aim to establish meaningful links with community partners and services to strengthen the College's ability to manage and respond to drug related issues. These may include:

- The Victorian Police
- Ambulance Victoria
- Headspace
- Community agencies
- Local health services
- Individual and family counseling services.

Professional Learning is essential in providing opportunities for school staff to plan and implement appropriate drug education programs and to remain current with knowledge, trends, resources and practices in drug education. It will also assist staff in promoting the well-being of young people and the establishment of appropriate referral information and procedures in managing a drug related incident.

The provision of information to parents about drug related issues is essential in building the relationship between the school and the parent community. This can be achieved through a range of mediums.

Management of Drug Related Incidents

The possession, use, distribution or selling of illicit drugs or unsanctioned drugs on school premises at any function or activity organised by the school is prohibited.

In the case of incidents involving illicit or unsanctioned drugs at school or at a school event, initial actions and responses will focus on the safety and well-being of those directly and indirectly involved. Medical assistance will be provided if necessary as a priority.

Restorative practices will be embedded in the resolution of a drug related incident. Helping students to recognise the harm that has been caused to others by their action, and to investigate ways of repairing that harm is the focus. External agencies may also be called on to assist in this process.

If the Principal of the College has knowledge of the use, possession and distribution of illicit drugs the Victoria Police must be contacted in order for a collaborative approach with the wellbeing of the young person being the priority. The College will work collaboratively with Victoria Police to ensure appropriate action is taken in response to drug

related incidents including those involving illicit drugs. The College will also contact CEOB for advice. If the student has consumed or in possession of alcohol at school events, retreats, camps, school trips and other overnight excursions parents will be contacted to come and collect the student. Please refer to Mercy Regional College’s Behaviour Management Policy for outcomes as a result of student behaviour.

Support Services

Students will be offered support from within the College Student Support Services as well the facilitation of external support in partnership with parents/carers from allied health services in the wider community.

Procedures for responding to drug-related incidents in Catholic schools

A student possessing, using, distributing, trafficking or selling illicit or unsanctioned drugs while attending school or within the school vicinity, including engaging in a school activity away from school or travelling to or from that engagement, is prohibited. Schools have clearly defined policies and procedures relating to drug issues that align with the school’s pastoral care and behaviour support policies. These policies and procedures also outline the school’s drug-education approach.

Members of the school community who have knowledge of illicit or unsanctioned drug use by others are expected to act morally and with a duty of care by reporting the matter to a responsible member of the school community. This is usually the school’s Principal. In the case of a drug-related incident, initial actions and responses focus on the safety and wellbeing of those directly and indirectly involved.



Where a student is found in possession, using, selling, trafficking or otherwise distributing illicit drugs, the student’s parents or carers will be informed and the locally designated police officer will be notified. The school will work collaboratively and continually with Victoria Police to safeguard the wellbeing of the young person and the wider community, and to ensure appropriate action is taken in response to the drug-related incident. The school is encouraged to consult with CEOB for advice on wellbeing, media and legal issues.

The Principal (or delegate), in consultation with wellbeing staff, must respond to a drug-related incident in a way that is consistent and fair, taking into account:

- the nature of the incident
- the circumstances of the student involved (including the student’s age, development, gender, and cultural and social needs)
- the needs and safety of the student and others
- legal requirements
- the school's policies and procedures, and CEOB's policies and procedures.



Timing	Response
<p><i>Immediate response</i></p> <p>The immediate priority in any drug-related incident is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • call 000 if there is immediate risk of harm or danger • call 000 in case of fumes or poisons, and 13 23 60 for accidents at school • ensure the immediate safety, welfare, and health needs of those directly and indirectly involved, including staff and students • stay calm and approach in a non-threatening way • make a first-aid assessment (if necessary seek medical support – i.e. first aid or ambulance) • gather any facts and relevant information • monitor the student and do not leave them unattended • seek assistance as soon as possible

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • safely collect any suspected drugs and drug paraphernalia (refer to 'Seizure of property' below or within the CECV's <i>Catholic schools operational guide</i>) • inform the Principal (or delegate) • isolate the situation from other students, if possible • assess the impact on other students (e.g. Are others involved? Are others affected?)
<p>Subsequent response when safe</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contact the local police station, noting that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ police must be notified where students are suspected of possessing, using, distributing or trafficking illicit drugs or drug implements, or are involved in the illegal use of licit substances or drugs ○ police should be notified in situations where an unidentifiable substance is suspected of being an illicit drug • subject to and following the police's advice, inform the parents or carers of students involved in incident • implement the school's pastoral care and behavioural support procedures, with appropriate support in place for the student (if drugs are illicit, police may also initiate intervention procedures) • contact health, community and welfare services as appropriate to the situation • inform the parish priest or other relevant school governing authority • inform CEOB and seek advice as required from the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ student wellbeing unit ○ legal unit ○ marketing and communications unit • establish a student support group (this may comprise the Assistant Principal, student wellbeing leader, school nurse, classroom teacher, school administration staff and health professionals) to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ gather, verify and document information ○ allocate tasks and roles ○ develop a 'Student support, safety and return-to-school plan' if required ○ develop a 'Student learning plan' if required ○ develop a communication strategy ○ consider interventions ○ consider sanctions in line with school pastoral care and behavioural support policies ○ monitor ongoing student needs • notify school staff as relevant, maintaining confidentiality requirements
<p>Follow-up action</p> <p>The Principal (or delegate) must ensure appropriate follow-up actions are implemented once the immediate safety and wellbeing of students have been attended to</p> <p>The goals of follow-up action are to: to support the student to continue their education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborate with the local Victoria Police. • inform school staff, students and families on a need-to-know basis, maintaining confidentiality and privacy (including relevant support services involved) • if relevant, develop a 'Student support, safety and return-to-school plan (including a safety-and-supervision plan for monitoring the student on return to school). • debrief staff where appropriate and offer then assistance as required such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) • provide the student with school wellbeing support, and link student and family with community support if appropriate • assess the need to refer students and staff to other agencies or professionals, within established protocols, to provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ advice and resources for school staff, parents, carers and students

to assist the student to overcome problems related to drug use to ensure the ongoing safety and wellbeing of students and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ medical assessment ○ counselling and support services for students involved with illicit and other unsanctioned drugs ○ professional development for school staff. ● conduct a school debrief and review of management of the incident, including school drug-education initiatives and strategies.
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Considerations related to the management of illicit or unsanctioned drug use

The following table provides some key considerations that need to be made when managing a drug-related incident.

Item	Description
<i>Confidentiality and privacy: general</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● maintain confidentiality at all times ● share only information that needs to be shared with those who need to know
<i>Confidentiality: detoxification and pharmacotherapy treatment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● information about detoxification, methadone or alternate pharmacotherapies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● is a private matter ● only needs to be shared between students and their <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ parent or carer ○ supporting community agency ○ designated school student wellbeing staff ● may be provided, at the principal's discretion, only <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ with the student's consent ○ to staff who have direct responsibility for the student (i.e. if the student's concentration or alertness may be affected by prescribed medication) <p><i>Note: students should not be excluded from attending school based on their ongoing detoxification</i></p>
<i>Drug testing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● any form of drug testing in schools is not supported as it raises: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a lack of trust between schools, families and students ● legal, technical, ethical and financial issues
<i>Duty of care</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teachers have a duty of care to pass on information to the principal (or delegate) if they have knowledge about illicit or unsanctioned drug use, possession, distribution or trafficking by students or members of a student's family. This is irrespective of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● whether the use, possession, distribution or trafficking ● is confirmed, suspected or likely to occur ● occurs on or outside school grounds ● the drug used <p><i>Note: under this duty of care, staff cannot promise unconditional confidentiality to students</i></p>
<i>Educational access during absence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● any student who is absent from school due to a drug-related incident or resultant treatment should be provided with a 'Student learning plan' as determined by the school in consultation with parents or carers
<i>Legal</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Principals are encouraged to contact the CEOB legal unit on 03 53377135 for legal advice

Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals are responsible for media contact; advice and support is available through the CEOB media coordinator on 0407 867 618
Parents and carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals should notify parents and carers as soon as practicable generally, parents and carers should always be informed about and involved in the management of drug-related incidents <p><i>Note 1: at times, Victoria Police may advise or request the Principal not to contact the parents or carers; the Principal (or delegate) has to follow advice from Victoria Police</i></p> <p><i>Note 2: teachers and Principals do not breach criminal law by failure to notify parents or carers of the use of an illicit drug, but there may be civil and duty-of-care implications</i></p>
Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> advise the local police contact person when they have knowledge of an alleged criminal offence, including the possession, trafficking, use and distribution of illicit drugs document internal procedures and actions undertaken
Professional learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> staff should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> informed of relevant policies and procedures provided with professional learning in responding to drug-related incidents
Record keeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all records pertaining to a drug-related incident must be carefully recorded, filed and retained ensure confidential records of drug-related incidents at school are maintained to support monitoring and evaluation of intervention policies and procedures
Seizure of property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> follow the procedures in the CECV's <i>Catholic schools operational guide</i>. <p><i>Students can be instructed by teachers to hand over certain items. For example, items in the student's possession such as cigarettes and other items prohibited by school policy or by law, or items that are used to disrupt classes or distract students such as mobile phones, can be requested to be handed over.</i></p> <p><i>If a student refuses to hand over these items, then action should be taken in accordance with the pastoral care policy of the school and discipline procedures.</i></p> <p><i>If the items are suspected weapons or drugs then the staff member needs to follow the directives of the protocol for dealing with suspected serious offences. Always, the safety of the students is of prime importance in managing potentially difficult or dangerous situations.</i></p> <p><i>Where items are confiscated, the responsibility for their preservation and security rests with the school. When this has occurred, a receipt should be issued to the student indicating that such an item has been impounded for safekeeping, pending further actions. The ownership of such items remains with the lawful owner of the property.</i></p> <p><i>If material is found to be a prohibited substance or an illegal substance, then the person holding such materials can be charged with possession of an illegal substance. Therefore, staff members need to act in a proper way</i></p>

	<p><i>when dealing with such a situation. Usually, the police deal with alleged criminal matters and are the appropriate authority for handling such matters. The CECV has signed a memorandum of understanding with government and independent schools sectors that it will collaborate with Victoria Police in drug-related incidents.</i></p> <p><i>Staff should not confiscate illegal drugs or prohibited items (flick knives, etc.) without informing the police immediately after. A member of staff (or any other person) in possession of such an item might be in a breach of the law. However, the safety and welfare of all students are of prime importance when considering what actions need to be taken.</i></p> <p><i>Please also see the Victorian Government's school policy to Ban, search and seize harmful items, on the Department of Education and Training's school policy and advisory Guide.</i></p>
Staff wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure staff wellbeing and safety, including additional support if required. This may be activated through the EAP
Student wellbeing: general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish a student support group to assess student needs and provide support avoid labelling the student or jumping to conclusions
Student wellbeing: continuing the student's engagement with their education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> schools should aim to have the student returned to school and resume normal school activities as soon as possible – careful facilitation and planning is required the school's response to a drug-related incident must not isolate and marginalise the student as this is likely to put them at further risk the school's role is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> educate provide support focusing on the student's wellbeing encourage the student to continue on an education pathway where appropriate, assist the student and family to link to appropriate community support services every effort should be made to maintain appropriate educational pathways for students involved in drug-related issues
Volatile substances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> if it is suspected that the incident involves a volatile substance or inhalant, schools should refer Mercy Regional College's Volatile Substance Use Policy.

Contact information support

- Emergency services (police, ambulance, fire) – 000
- Victoria Police youth support officer – contact local police station
- Headspace – www.headspace.org.au
- National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline – 1800 250 015
- Direct Line, Department of Health Victoria – 1800 888 236
- Youth Drugs and Alcohol Advice (YoDAA) – 1800 458 685 or www.yodaa.org.au
- Alcohol and Drug Foundation Information Line – 1800 85 85 84
- National Drugs Campaign – campaigns.health.gov.au/drug_help
- CEOB student wellbeing unit – 03 9267 0228
- CEOB legal unit – 03 9267 0228
- CEOB Media Coordinator – 0407 867 618
- Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800
- Lifeline – 13 11 14

References:

- Catholic Education Office Ballarat (CEOB): Drug Issues in Catholic Schools.
- Australian Drug Foundation: Drug Info (<http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au/drug-facts/drugs-the-facts>)
- Department of Education & Training: School Policy and Advisory Guide
- Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training: Principles for School Drug Education

RELATED DOCUMENTS AND PROCEDURES

Mercy Regional College: Behaviour Management Policy
Mercy Regional College: Administration of Medication Policy
Mercy Regional College: Critical Incident Policy
Mercy Regional College: Alcohol Policy
Mercy Regional College: Medical Emergencies Procedures
Mercy Regional College: Volatile Substance Use Policy

Related Documents

Banned Substance Procedure

Date Approved:
Principal Name:
Signature:
Date presented at College Board Meeting:
Author: Assistant Principal & Compliance Officer
Person Responsible for Implementation: The Principal
Developed Date: December 2019
Next Review Date: December 2022
Location Checklist: <input type="checkbox"/> Staff Handbook <input type="checkbox"/> Students <input type="checkbox"/> Parent Portal <input type="checkbox"/> Website