

Mercy Regional College Banned Substances Policy

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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. 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.

A. 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

B. 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 counselling 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.

C. 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.

D. 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.

4. References:

Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM): Policy 2.13 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

5. Related Documents

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