# **Chaplaincy and student wellbeing officer services**

**Guidelines for schools**

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**Overview**

These guidelinesprovide Queensland state schools (and stakeholders) with information regarding operational matters likely to affect the implementation of services provided by chaplains and student wellbeing officersdefinitions, both funded and voluntary.

**Establishing a service**

**Community consultation**

Local community support is required for these services to operate in a school. Evidence of the community consultation that occurs prior to the introduction of a chaplaincy or student wellbeing officer service may include parent and/or school surveys, minutes from Parents and Citizens’ Association (P&C) or School Council meetings, or from consultation sessions with the school community. Results of any consultation should be communicated to the school community. Documented community support is also required should a school seek to switch the type of service (i.e. from a chaplain to a student wellbeing officer, or vice versa).

It is important that the principal also consults with the school community, including the P&C/School Council, to decide whether services would be best provided through a single arrangement definitions or a cluster arrangement and to then identify an appropriate Accredited Employing Authority (AEA) to deliver these servicesfactsheet3 12/411220 definitions.

**Local committees — optional**

Schools may choose to form a local chaplaincy or student wellbeing committee to provide advice to the principal on the development and implementation of a chaplaincy or student wellbeing officer service. The committee may operate as a subcommittee of the P&C or may exist separate to that structure.

The membership of the committee should include the principal (or authorised delegate), worker, AEA delegate and other members that are representative of the diversity of beliefs, faiths or worldviews in the school community. The members should understand the cultural and religious customs, as well as the overall needs of the individuals and groups within the school community, and the range of support services that are currently available and/or required.

The role of the committee may include, but is not limited to:

* collaborative planning and communication about the service
* monitoring provision of the service
* identification and resolution of issues regarding the service
* management of requirements for the service (e.g. financial support)
* provision of guidance and support to the chaplain or student wellbeing officer.

**Selecting an Accredited Employing Authority**

Schools do not employ a chaplain or student wellbeing officer directly. These workers are instead engaged through an external organisation that has been accredited by the Department of Education to specifically provide these services in schools.

The department hasa standing offer arrangement (SOA)definitions with a number of AEA organisations. Schools can access specific AEA information on OnePortal — [Supplier arrangements.](https://intranet.qed.qld.gov.au/Services/Procurement_Purchasing/Supplyarrangements/Pages/chaplaincy-student-wellbeing-officer-youth-support-coordinator-qld-state-schools.aspx) If the school is unable to source the required services through a listed AEA 13/233040 (e.g. due to geographical remoteness), an alternate local organisation may be sourced and approached to become part of the SOA.

The school or prospective AEA can contact the department’s Procurement Services team at [procurement.ggs@qed.qld.gov.au](mailto:procurement.ggs@qed.qld.gov.au) for further information on the SOA application process if an alternate organisation is identified.

**Communication strategies**

The principal should establish communication processes to provide parents at enrolment, and/or on request, information which outlines the school’s chaplaincy or student wellbeing officer program. This supports parents to make an informed decision regarding their child/ren’s participation in activities provided by the worker and/or provide consent definitionsfor ongoing one-on-one meetings. It is useful to publish this information on the school’s website, in the parent handbook, and/or school newsletter.

website information 11/273694

The principal should also establish regular communication processes with the AEA (this may include their community support network) to ensure the effective management of the service.

The worker should observe the communication protocols established within the school to ensure a coordinated approach to the dissemination of information to the principal, administration, school staff, students and the wider school community.

Any communication about chaplaincy or student wellbeing officer program events or activities in the school newsletter or on the school website should not contain any evangelisingdefinitions, proselytising or any attempt to undermine a student’s religious or other beliefsdefinitions. Content about the chaplaincy or student wellbeing officer program, or general information written by the chaplain or student wellbeing officer, should be approved by the principal before distribution. Communication to parents about activities or events organised by the worker (e.g. events organised outside of school time, a camp with a religious component, a visit from an external chaplaincy band etc) are to be approved by the principal, should clearly state the facts and must not be presented as an [advertisement](https://ppr.qed.qld.gov.au/pp/advertising-procedure). The information is to include details about the organisers and affiliates of the activity or event being offered, to ensure parents/caregivers can make informed decisions about whether their child is involved or not.

**Student referral and access**

Schools should establish a student referral and appointment process that enables safe and timely access to these services in a manner that meets the needs of both the school and students.

Access may need to occur during lesson time, or within the broader school day. Students should follow the protocols of the school regarding absence from, or late arrival to class (e.g. a late slip, appointment slip). During school hours, students may access the chaplain or student wellbeing officer outside of class lesson time without informing school staff.

School staff with concerns for any student should consider the support options available at the school. Those who identify a need for the student to access the chaplain or student wellbeing officer should discuss this with the student concerned and, if the student wants to access the chaplain or student wellbeing officer, support the student in making an appointment. Note: written informed parental/caregiver consent (or student consent if deemed competent by the principal as having the ability to provide informed consent) is required should the student access the chaplain or student wellbeing officer on a one-on-one ongoing basis beyond the initial one-on-one meeting.

The chaplain or student wellbeing officer should use discretion and be mindful of privacy provisions when following up with a student regarding a consultation.

The student’s independent decision to act upon the referral should be confirmed by the worker at the initial consultation.

If the student or parent does not consent, the chaplain or student wellbeing worker will discontinue the consultation. Where the student has not consented and has not been seen by the worker, the staff member may be notified that the student has elected not to have an individual consultation. This allows for other options for supporting the student to be explored.

Part of a chaplain or student wellbeing officer’s role is to provide information regarding the range of support options available to students for further consideration or assistance. In order to ensure coordinated case management of student support, each referral that a chaplain or student wellbeing officer makes to an external agency or service requires the explicit approval of the school’s principal, deputy principal or guidance officer, and consent of the parent (or student if deemed competent by the principal to provide this consent).

**Consent arrangements**

A student may be involved in an initial one-on-one meeting with the chaplain or student wellbeing officer. The initial one-on-one meeting is to determine whether the student will benefit from the service or if alternative services are more appropriate. As such the initial one-on-one meeting does not require parental/caregiver consent. All other one-on-one meetings after this initial meeting can only occur once written permission has been provided by the student’s parent or the student themselves (if the student is deemed competent by the principal to give informed consent).

[Form 1: Parent/Student Consent Form](https://education.qld.gov.au/student/Documents/parent-student-consent-form.docx)has been developed as an optional form for schools to use. Schools may choose to obtain informed written consent in another way (e.g. via an email from parents). **Note:** The principal will need to assess if the young person has a sufficient level of maturity and understanding with regard to the issues to determine whether the young person comprehends and can consent to their participation in ongoing one-on-one meetings with the worker.

**Induction and orientation**

The school should ensure that the chaplain/student wellbeing officer understands the nature of their rolefactsheet1 in the school setting and the appropriate boundaries of professional conduct and personal interaction with students. As well as the school-based inductionfact sheet 2, it is valuable to team the worker with a key contact person to assist with the initial introduction to the school and its operation and to provide ongoing support as required.

The worker should be supported to become an integral member of the school support team and opportunities for collaboration across the school should be facilitated. As part of this, the worker should be provided with timely information about school operations and variations to school routines that may affect or inform their services, including access to staff educational activities and professional development that is relevant to their role.

The chaplain/student wellbeing officer can assist this partnership by ensuring that the current name and contact phone number of the AEA nominated delegate is held by the school and that they have provided a timetable with contact phone numbers to each school in which they deliver a service.

**Facilities**

The recommended minimum facilities required for the chaplain or student wellbeing officer to perform their duties should include:

* access to [Student Protection](https://ppr.qed.qld.gov.au/pp/student-protection-procedure)and [*Code of Conduct for the Queensland public service*](https://www.forgov.qld.gov.au/code-conduct-queensland-public-service)information and training
* access to a separate room which enables the worker to conduct confidential consultations on the days that services are provided
* access to a lockable filing cabinet and other secure storage facilities to enable the worker to securely store confidential case records
* access to a desk, telephone, photocopier and computer with ready access to email facilities and relevant school-based information technology systems.

If there is difficulty in providing the recommended minimum facilities, the principal works in conjunction with the chaplain or student wellbeing officer and AEA to reach a resolution. Chaplains and student wellbeing officers are not provided with access to OneSchool.

**Resources**

The school should provide appropriate materials for the preparation and delivery of approved workplandefinitions activities, as well as resources required for agreed school programs in which the chaplain or student wellbeing officer is involved.

All resources purchased by the school, or through school-based fundraising, remain the property of the school, whereas resources purchased by the AEA remain the property of the AEA.

Any gifts received by the worker during their employment must be declared to the principal and the AEA as outlined in the [Receipt of Gifts and Benefits](https://ppr.qed.qld.gov.au/pp/gifts-and-benefits-procedure) procedure.

**Delivering a service**

**Student protection**

Chaplains and student wellbeing officers are bound by the department’s [Student Protection](https://ppr.qed.qld.gov.au/pp/student-protection-procedure)procedureat all times, including in the provision of services or participation in activities arising from, or associated with, their engagement with a school.

The principal must ensure the worker undertakes some form of student protection training. The level of training required is at the principal’s discretion, but may include provision of the [Student protection fact sheet for visitors](https://intranet.qed.qld.gov.au/Students/studentprotection/Documents/student-protection-fact-sheet-visitors.DOCX) or completion of the [Mandatory All‑Staff Training program: Key Messages Guide for contractors, volunteers, visitors, preservice teachers and other adult students on placement](https://qed.qld.gov.au/workingwithus/induction/queenslandstateschools/Documents/key-messages-guide.pdf). Principals must also keep a record of all chaplains and student wellbeing officers who complete the student protection training.

Chaplains and student wellbeing officers are not [authorised officers](https://ppr.qed.qld.gov.au/delegations-and-authorisations) under the provisions of the [*Child Protection Act 1999*](https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1999-010), and therefore do not have the authority to share information on behalf of the department in relation to children in need of protection.

Chaplains and student wellbeing officers are not employees of the department and therefore are not provided access to OneSchool.

Should the chaplain or student wellbeing officer have a complaint relating to student protection matters where an employee is involved, follow the process outlined in the [Allegations against employees in the area of student protection](https://ppr.qed.qld.gov.au/pp/allegations-against-employees-in-the-area-of-student-protection-procedure) procedure, including informing the department’s Conduct and Complaints team.

**Code of Conduct**

Chaplains and student wellbeing officers are bound by the [*Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service*](https://www.forgov.qld.gov.au/code-conduct-queensland-public-service) at all times, including when providing services or participating in activities arising from, or associated with, their engagement with a school. This includes reporting any conduct of an employee that raises suspicion of a possible breach to the principal, cooperating with any authorised officer in any investigation or other resolution strategy, and cooperating through active participation in any required training or development initiatives.

**Professional development and professional supervision**

Chaplains and student wellbeing officers are encouraged to participate in professional development and professional supervision to ensure that quality services are provided.

Where the professional development or training request has arisen from a need identified by the school, attendance and funding (if required) should be negotiated between the principal, the chaplain/student wellbeing officer and the AEA nominated delegate. Organisation-based professional development is the responsibility of the AEA and chaplain/student wellbeing officer.

Whilst every attempt should be made to conduct professional development, training and professional supervision activities outside student contact hours or in school holidays, there may be circumstances where this is not possible and the worker may be absent from the school for this purpose.

In particular, during their first year in the service, the worker may be given additional opportunities (as required) to access self-directed or organised training programs in order to augment and build the capacity of their service delivery.

Chaplains and student wellbeing officers funded by the Australian Government’s NSWP are required to undertake a professional learning package in responding to and preventing cyberbullying delivered by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner within three months of commencing services and refresh this professional learning at least once every two and half years. Further information on this professional learning is available on the Australian Government Department of Education [webpage](https://www.dese.gov.au/national-school-chaplaincy-program-nscp).

**Media liaison and marketing**

Any public media attention relating specifically to the worker, or the chaplaincy/student wellbeing officer program within a school, should be subject to the approval of the principal and the AEA nominated delegate prior to any engagement with the media and publication or broadcast.

Any promotional programs or activities proposed to be conducted by the worker in schools (e.g. “Chappy Week”) should be approved by the principal prior to their commencement.

The content of any media releases or marketing materials published by the department in respect of these services will be at the sole discretion of the department. The department will consult with the Australian Government about the nature and content of any events, announcements, promotional material or publicity relating to activities under the NSWP.

**Confidentiality**

Section 426 of the *Education (General Provisions) Act (2006)* (‘the confidentiality provision’) requires that employees of state schools must not record, use or disclose a student’s personal information unless one of the exemptions in the section applies. ‘Employee’ is defined to include a person engaged under a contract for services (i.e. chaplain/student wellbeing officer).

Chaplains and student wellbeing officers are required under the Deed of Agreement definitions to sign a [Deed of Confidentiality, Privacy and Conflicts of Interest](https://education.qld.gov.au/student/Documents/deed-of-confidentiality-privacy-conflicts-interest.pdf) definitions and to provide this to the principal prior to commencing a service in a school. The principal also signs the Deed.

The reason a student seeks access to, and the outcome of any consultation with, a chaplain or student wellbeing officer will not be disclosed by the worker without the parent’s or student’s informed consent, unless required by law. This includes providing access to confidential case notes recorded by the worker.

**Inviting external people onto the school premises**

The principal has the discretion to approve external individuals, groups or organisations (e.g. musicians or guest speakers) to be invited onto the school premises. Such decisions should be made in consultation with the school community. The principal should be well informed about any event, program or activity provided by an external party. Chaplains and student wellbeing officers must gain approval in advance from the principal.

**Changing the worker or the type of worker**

Schools have the option to choose the type of worker that best meets their needs – either a chaplain or student wellbeing officer.

Any change to the type of worker should be made with the (documented) support of the school community (e.g. captured in minutes of a P&C meeting) and reported to the department by email at [chaplainswellbeingofficers@qed.qld.gov.au](mailto:chaplainswellbeingofficers@qed.qld.gov.au).

The school and/or the AEA may reasonably seek to replace a worker at any time. A replacement may be required due to resignation, prolonged absence, or poor performance of the chaplain or student wellbeing officer (subject to the resolution process).

**Reporting requirements**

As part of the SOA, an annual customer satisfaction survey is provided to schools. Schools report on the effectiveness of the level of communication provided to the school by the AEA, the effectiveness of the level of support provided to the school by the AEA and the overall effectiveness of the services provided by the AEA to the school. Principals voluntarily complete this survey in Semester 1 of each year following the year of service delivery.

**Managing a service**

**Managing risk**

Good communication, together with a shared understanding of the guidelines and school processes, should enable issues to be raised and addressed before they become problematic.

The principal in conjunction with the P&C/School Council, AEA and regional office (if required) should manage any risk and ongoing impact the risk may have on students, employees, the AEA and if necessary, the broader school community.

All activities associated with these services should be considered in terms of their inherent level of risk.

A [risk assessment](https://ppr.qed.qld.gov.au/pp/enterprise-risk-management-policy) should be undertaken prior to services commencing so potential risks can be identified, analysed and evaluated, and strategies to manage the risks are developed.

**Complaint management and resolution**

Wherever possible, issues, problems or conflicts related to the service should be addressed at the school level in the first instance and treated in a confidential and professional manner, and in accordance with the department’s [Customer Complaints Management Framework](https://ppr.qed.qld.gov.au/attachment/customer-complaints-management-framework.pdf), [policy](https://ppr.qed.qld.gov.au/pp/customer-complaints-management-policy) and [procedure](https://ppr.qed.qld.gov.au/pp/customer-complaints-management-procedure). Principals and AEAs should refer complaints of alleged breaches of the [*Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service*](https://www.forgov.qld.gov.au/code-conduct-queensland-public-service) and [*Standard of Practice*](https://qed.qld.gov.au/workingwithus/induction/workingforthedepartment/inductionandonboarding/Documents/code-of-conduct-standard-of-practice.pdf) to the department’s [Conduct and Complaints team](https://www.qld.gov.au/education/schools/information/contact/complaint#enquiries).

The processes for resolution of a problem, in a timely and collaborative manner, could include:

* utilising the P&C/School Council as an avenue for the identification of issues
* the principal, chaplain or student wellbeing officer and the AEA nominated delegate informally discussing the identified problem as soon as possible to promote mutual understanding and clarification of the issues, and attempting to resolve the problems at the local school level in the first instance
* the chaplain or student wellbeing officer raising any concerns regarding a member of school staff or other school-based matters with the principal or AEA nominated delegate (who will then approach the principal to discuss the matter) — if the concern relates to the principal, the worker/AEA nominated delegate will raise the matter with the principal’s supervisor at the regional office
* the AEA nominated delegate or the principal referring the matter to the principal’s supervisor if there is no agreed resolution to the problem at the local level, with communication of the outcome to all parties
* following the process to determine if withdrawal of approval is appropriate:
* give the chaplain or student wellbeing officer and AEA nominated delegate written notice of matters of concern and invite either a written response or a meeting to discuss issues and allow them to provide an oral response
* if necessary, with the consent of the chaplain or student wellbeing officer and AEA nominated delegate establish, in writing, a process to resolve the issues of concern
* if not satisfied with the response provided by the chaplain or student wellbeing officer and AEA nominated delegate, withdraw approval until the issues are resolved, and provide written notice of this decision to the worker and AEA coordinator.

Where the complaint has not been resolved, the principal or AEA will contact the department using the contact details below and the complaint will be managed in accordance with the SOA.

**Contact details**

For more information, state schools should contact their [local regional office](https://education.qld.gov.au/contact-us/state-schools-regional-contacts), or, if the region cannot assist, email [chaplainswellbeingofficers@qed.qld.gov.au](mailto:chaplainswellbeingofficers@qed.qld.gov.au).