

Counseling Support Policy

I. Overview

This policy aims to ensure that the support provided at Ras Al Khaimah American Academy (RAK AA) is accessible to all students and within the framework of our school code of conduct, whereby Diversity, Access, Equity and Inclusion, are core precepts to building a respectful culture and an engaged and resilient student community.

This policy applies to all students at RAK AA. The services covered under this policy include the provision of counselling, referrals, guidance, advice and support regarding academic progress and student psychological needs and wellbeing.

II. Policy Aims and Principles

Counseling service in the school is guided by the following principles:

- RAK AA is committed to cultivating a respectful, diverse and inclusive community. The School takes seriously, the right of students and staff to have a safe, secure and comfortable learning and work environment.
- The School provides education and interventions to align with creating a culture of respect and care so that barriers to seeking support can be broken down.
- Counseling service is easy to access and available to all students at no additional charge and with or without a formal written referral.
- The School recognizes the diversity of the general, psychosocial, well-being and learning needs of students. Thus, the school is committed to provide reasonable adjustment to decrease obstacles that may exist, and to enable students the opportunity to progress and flourish.
- The School aims to apply Prevention and Early Intervention strategies to provide Just-in-Time support and to identify students who may be experiencing hurdles to progress and wellbeing.
- The School will implement strategies to raise student awareness to personal safety risks and issues and what to do in the event of a personal crisis.

III. Guidelines for Counseling

❖ Confidentiality and Record Keeping

All students have a right to confidentiality in their dealings with the counselor. The right is not Universal, however, and there are some cases in which - for the student's best interest - confidentiality cannot be guaranteed e.g. in the case of abuse, bullying, and risk to another student's life. In counseling the student, he/she is made aware that confidentiality could not be guaranteed in any of the above cases and that information of this nature would have to be referred to. In short:

- All things discussed are confidential between the student and the counselor except when the student himself or another person is at risk.
- Any information which highlights that the student, or another person is in danger.
- If the student is in danger of doing grievous harm to himself.

- Recording of counseling sessions is kept to a minimum. The counselor makes notes for own future reference without recording the details of the problems.

The counseling folder will include an information sheet with the following details:

1. Name
2. Class
3. Referred by
4. Date
5. Nature of problems
6. Action taken
7. Recommendation

❖ **Referrals**

The counsellor may also refer a student to an external, appropriately qualified professional. A referral may occur after the counselor has made an informed decision that the student's situation requires assistance beyond the counselor's professional training.

Parents are provided with referral details and they make the decision to proceed with an appointment with the specialist.

❖ **Preventive Measures**

Every class is provided with an opportunity for the discussion of important issues such as equality, friendship, freedom, justice, rights, and responsibilities. Class time brings together the children and adults in a positive, encouraging and non-judgmental way.

The school rules are mentioned in detail in the school diary. They are discussed regularly with the students to ensure that all students have a clear understanding as to their meaning. They are also referred to in class and in assembly consistently throughout the school year.

Behaviors such as name-calling, bullying, physical aggression or disruptive behavior are dealt with seriously.

Parents are asked to contact the school if they have a concern. They are given the opportunity to meet with the counselor during the parent-teacher meetings. These are held three times a year. In addition, the counsellor is available for appointments with parents as and when required.

❖ **Child Protection**

The department also regulates the school's Child-Protection Policy which is in place to ensure that the child feels safe and secure in the school environment.

There are four main elements to our Child Protection Policy:

- Prevention (e.g., positive school atmosphere, class time periods where problems with classmates can be resolved and pastoral support)
- Protection (by following procedures, ensuring staff are aware and supported to respond immediately and sensitively to child protection concerns).

- Support (to students and school staff and to children who may have been abused)
- Collaboration (with staff, students & parents) to promote Safeguarding and wellbeing of all our students.

This policy applies to all staff of the school. We recognize that child protection is the responsibility of all staff within our school. (Refer to Child Protection Policy)

❖ Services Provided:

The services provided under the counselling department can be categorized into counselling, career guidance, training and psychological assessment.

- ✚ **Counseling.** This service is designed to assist students to utilize their own resources for growth in self-understanding, planning, decision-making and coping with their personal issues and handling academic challenges. Identification of student need can come from the teacher, parent, concerned adult in the student's life or the student himself. The counselling sessions are held in strict confidentiality.
- ✚ Counselling that takes place in the school can be divided into – individual and group.
 - **Individual Counseling** - is an interactive process, which facilitates meaningful understanding of the self and environment and/or clarification of goals and values for future behavior. The student is assisted to cope with personal challenges they are facing.
 - **Group Counseling** - counselling for more than two people. This would take place when there are classroom situations that require outside intervention. The students are encouraged to listen to, support and challenge each other and thus, learn to be open, constructive, and assertive and to experience how others see them. This normally takes place in the class time period.
- ✚ **Career Guidance/Information Service.** The service functions as a guide to students in planning academic for years 6-12, exploring career interest and opportunities and guiding through the university admissions and selection process. The school conducts career fairs annually and students are informed about career fairs taking place in the UAE and are encouraged to visit various universities. Careful interpretation of the standardized test results such as CAT4, Internal assessments and marks, qualification of area of interest, personality, and family systems are analyzed to assist the students prepare for their career path. Having in great consideration that career starts from school and that we want our graduates to land on their most suited career path.

The counselor should be familiar with

- ✓ The requirements of students, parents, pastoral structures and school administration
- ✓ The sources of useful information locally and internationally
- ✓ Systems for acquiring, storing and disseminating information e.g. an adequate career library, appropriate student and parental access to pertinent useful information etc.
- ✓ Methods of processing and using information for the student in an integrated way e.g. making it clear, understandable and student friendly.

The goal of the information service is to help the student in decision making processes and problem solving.

- ✚ **Training:** The aim of this service is to provide information for the improvement of the students' academic, emotional, personal and social life through workshops, lectures or presentations.

Teachers are also provided with training sessions on helping the students to have access to a healthy and wholesome life. They are also provided with tips on identifying students who maybe struggling with self-esteem and acceptance issues.

Behavior Management in the Classroom

As a result of counseling sessions with students, the teachers are made aware of below strategies that will assist in good classroom management for these students and promote an excellent learning environment.

- Reduce seating distractions. Lessen distractions. Keep child near the teacher instead of near the window/door.
- Break down assignments. Keep instructions clear and brief, breaking down larger tasks into smaller, more manageable pieces.
- Give positive reinforcement. Always be on the lookout for positive behaviors. Praise the student when he/she stays seated, doesn't call out, or waits his or her turn instead of criticizing when he or she doesn't.
- Teach good study skills. Underlining, note taking, and reading out loud can help him stay focused and retain information.
- Supervise. Check that he goes and comes from school with the correct books and materials.
- Buddy system
- Be sensitive to self-esteem issues. Avoid asking him/her to perform a task in public that might be too difficult. Reward appropriate behavior.
- Provide opportunities for responsibility. Give the student a job (attendance, door person, distribution of books) which requires him/her to take some responsibility and praise even the smallest success.

- ✚ **Psychological Assessment:** This service is provided by Cambridge Center- (our partner institution) to our students who may need further external evaluation and assessment of their intellectual, emotional, behavioral and social issues. A report is then made available to the parents and the school. The counselor/social worker ensures that the teachers are aware of the recommendations provided and follow up is done on the same.

Tests may include: Personality tests, Aptitude tests, Interest Inventories, Problem checklist,

General ability tests, Performance tests, School exam results and External exam results such as MAP and CAT 4

IV.Roles and Responsibilities

All adult/staff have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This includes a responsibility to be alert to possible abuse and to record and report concerns to the Counselling department.

The counselor/social worker is designated to take the lead responsibility for students who need professional assistance from a pastoral role such as liaising with the family of the concerned student,

providing advice and support and information to staff as appropriate, maintaining records for individual children and arranging proper training/awareness for all staff.

V. Information Distribution

Keeping the services in mind, it is important that all the students, parents as well as the teaching and non-teaching staff are informed of the facilities available in the school.

Information for Students. Regarding the counselling service, each class is informed or reminded at the beginning of the school year, during their orientation (School diary), of the school counselling service. They are provided with a Call Slip to be provided to the teacher for the class they are missing.

Information for Parents. The parents are also made to feel free and welcome to come and visit the guidance counselor/social worker. Phone calls from parents over a concern are also accommodated. Also, as part of overall school information dissemination e.g. school notices and parent-teacher meetings, parent orientation days, information regarding guidance and counselling is made available as required.

Information for Staff Member. All staff members are particularly informed regarding students who are under their care and have educational, physical, social, behavioral problems. The counselor/social worker makes available all relevant information about students to the teaching staff. This includes tips for classroom management and access to useful website links.

VI. Ethical Requirements

Ethical awareness is a prerequisite for the counselor/social worker. She is obliged to operate, in policy, process and practice in an ethical manner. The counselor/ social worker's primary focus is the welfare of the student and she is ethically bound to act in the best interest of the student. The counselor/social worker must act within the law and within the ethical guidelines as outlined by her profession. The counsellor/social worker discusses with and informs both staff and students of information that is relevant and pertinent to their situation.

VII. Success Criteria

The policy will be considered to be successful, if:

- There is an increased awareness and understanding of the importance of listening to student concerns.
- Students feel that there are people who have time to listen to them and also to steer them toward those who can help them further.
- Students with concerns are dealt with sensitively and in confidence if appropriate.

VIII. Policy Review

The counselling policy will be reviewed annually.

IX. Addendum

- Online counseling is made available for this academic year 2020-21. All kinds of concern such as academic, behavioral, emotional, social and career guidance will be addressed by the School counselor. A counseling email is also created to encourage students to talk or share their concern through writing.



RAS AL KHAIMAH AMERICAN ACADEMY
أكاديمية رأس الخيمة الأمريكية

Policy created: 13-06-2019 by Ms. Ola

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