



# SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

## INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

The School Mental Health Service (SMHS) sits within Student Support Services in the Department for Education. Mental health practitioners are based in schools to support young people with mild to moderate and emerging mental health concerns.

Practitioners may provide a range of services, including:

- assessing student mental health needs and concerns
- supporting students to develop strategies to manage distress and maintain their mental health
- contributing to referral and case management processes for students with more complex mental health presentations
- supporting referrals and linking to external support services as required
- developing the mental health literacy of their school communities.

Practitioners have formal training in psychology, social work and/or occupational therapy and experience working in mental health related settings. They work collaboratively with students and families, education staff, other support service providers and external agencies to support young people to improve their psychological health and emotional wellbeing.

### How does the service work?

The SMHS provides a brief intervention service – short term, time limited support.

The practitioners work alongside the student and family to identify difficulties, determine goals and complete a SMHS wellbeing safety plan. This information is then used to plan future sessions.

There is often a large focus on skill building and providing helpful information to support students to develop coping strategies and assist students and families to understand their current situation.

### What if the student requires longer term support?

If longer term or more complex supports are needed, the practitioner will work with the student and their family to identify and link in with ongoing support services.

### Are parents and carers involved in the service?

Where possible, the practitioners will take a family-based approach. This means that as parents and/or carers, you may be asked to contribute to the assessment and intervention.

### Is there a cost?

The SMHS is free. The SMHS is fully funded by the Department for Education and is offered with no out of pocket costs to students and their families.

### What is the referral process?

Schools have a range of strategies and programs in place to support student mental health and wellbeing. If your child has mental health or wellbeing concerns, these should be discussed with your child's teacher or the school's wellbeing staff in the first instance.

The wellbeing team will consider the needs of the individual student and service eligibility to determine if they should be referred to the SMHS. Students do not need to see a general practitioner or get a mental health care plan to access the SMHS.

### How does the service maintain confidentiality?

The SMHS offers a confidential service and relevant information may be shared with School Leaders (with parent and student consent). Details about confidentiality and information sharing will be discussed further at the initial appointment.

When issues of safety are identified, the practitioner will provide information to the school to ensure students are supported.

SMHS practitioners are Mandated Notifiers.



### Where can I go for more information?

For more information about the SMHS, visit [www.education.sa.gov.au/SMHS](http://www.education.sa.gov.au/SMHS)

