

Eating Disorders Policy



The Hazard – Eating Disorders

Eating disorders, such as Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa and Binge Eating Disorder, are serious mental illnesses which often require psychological and/or physical intervention to promote recovery.

Lavalla Catholic College's Policy

Lavalla Catholic College is committed to providing an environment that promotes the importance of self-esteem and body satisfaction and raises awareness of the dangers of eating disorders.

We are focused on the identification, early intervention and prevention of eating disorders amongst our students. It is our policy that:

- We provide an environment that promotes student wellbeing through general education programmes that increase self-esteem and address adolescent issues;
- We implement College policies and practices that promote emotional wellbeing as well as healthy eating and a diversity of body shapes and sizes in College activities and promotions;
- Our staff are trained to recognise signs of eating disorders and are able to identify and support at risk students;
- We establish procedures for responding to and dealing with students who have been diagnosed with eating disorders; and
- We provide education, support and resources for staff, parents, students and the wider College community on the issue to assist in managing eating disorders.

Common Signs of Eating Disorders

The signs and symptoms of eating disorders will vary between students and are often difficult to detect as sufferers often try to hide their condition and associated behaviours.

As a guide, staff should take note of the following signs:

Behavioural Warning Signs:

- Dieting or overeating excessively;
- Eating very quickly or very slowly;
- Eating only certain types and amounts of food;
- Avoiding social situations that involve food;
- 'Playing' with food rather than eating it;
- Going to the bathroom straight after meals;
- Wearing loose fitting clothes to hide weight loss;
- Exercising excessively; and
- Obsessively and repetitively weighing themselves.

Physical Warning Signs:

- Sudden or rapid weight loss;
- Signs of frequent vomiting – swollen cheeks / jawline, calluses on knuckles, or damage to teeth;

- Fainting or dizziness; and
- Fatigue – always feeling tired, unable to perform normal activities.

Psychological Warning Signs:

- Preoccupation with body image, body weight and food;
- Becoming irritable or withdrawing from friends;
- Being sensitive to comments about food, exercise, weight or body shape;
- Feeling depressed or anxious;
- Being sensitive to criticism, or feeling guilty;
- Having difficulty concentrating;
- Having problems with relationships; and
- Having suicidal thoughts or behaviour.

Safe Work Practices

Lavalla Catholic College has developed the following work practices and procedures for managing eating disorders:

Notification of Eating Disorders

Eating disorders may be identified by parents / guardians and reported to the College, or they may be identified by a staff member.

When a staff member suspects a student is suffering from an undiagnosed eating disorder they should:

- Identify their concerns and observations and provide these to the student's Learning Advisor / Homeroom Teacher as soon as possible; and
- Not raise their concerns directly with the student.

Where a student discloses to a staff member that they have a previously undiagnosed eating disorder the staff member should:

- Respond in a 'neutral' and 'matter of fact' manner and acknowledge the behaviour as something they are familiar with;
- Avoid making well-meaning personal comments about the student's appearance;
- Not be judgemental or react negatively;
- Advise the student that eating disorders are not uncommon and that the College has procedures to help assist students in these circumstances;
- Ask the student if there is any immediate support / assistance that they need;
- Thank the student for confiding in them and advise the student that they may need to discuss the issue with another member of staff so that the College can provide appropriate assistance;
- Assure the student that the information they have provided will be handled sensitively; and
- Identify their concerns and observations and provide these to the student's Homeroom Teacher / Learning Advisor and Wellbeing Leader / Head of House as soon as possible. The Homeroom Teacher / Learning Advisor or Wellbeing Leader / Head of House will notify the Deputy Principal – Student Wellbeing & Operations who will then collaborate with the relevant Wellbeing Team to create a support team who will arrange and document a Health Support Plan.

Health Support Plan

A Health Support Plan should be instigated and developed by the relevant Wellbeing Team for any student suffering from an eating disorder taking into account:

- Agreed roles and responsibilities of the College, parents, teachers and students;
- Academic expectations;
- Agreed behaviour management strategies;
- Agreed learning outcomes and strategies;
- Liaison procedures between parties; and
- Regular review procedures.

The Health Support Plan shall be stored appropriately and updated regularly. It shall be communicated to relevant staff in a confidential manner.

Staff Responsibility

All Lavalla Catholic College staff are responsible to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to identify and support students who may be at risk of an eating disorder. Early intervention and ongoing management is vital in promoting recovery.

Each staff member shall fulfil their agreed roles as documented in a student's individual Health Support Plan and the College shall inform parents / guardians as soon as possible of concerns regarding a student's health care, learning and behaviour management needs.

Implementation

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- Staff training and supervision
- Maintenance of the student's Health Support Plan;
- Effective incident notification procedures;
- Effective communication procedures with the student's parents / guardians; and
- Initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

Discipline for Breach of Policy

Where a staff member breaches this policy, Lavalla Catholic College may take disciplinary action.

Related Policies

Medical Records (Student) Policy