

Robert Menzies College

Guideline Policy: High Support Needs Residents

POLICY

The following Guideline is made in accordance Section 2 the RMC Accommodation Agreement (**Accommodation Agreement**) which residents execute before accepting an offer of student residence at Robert Menzies College (**RMC**).

1. RMC is a Christian college, dedicated to "creating a caring community". As Christians, we believe that all people, regardless of their religion, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality or ability, are created in the image of God and are therefore valuable and deserving of our care. The belief that all people are to be treated equally and deserving of the care is reinforced by the policies of Macquarie University Commonwealth and state anti-discrimination legislation.
2. RMC community is strongest when it is made up of people of diverse backgrounds and abilities. We believe that, as a Christian college, we have a particular responsibility to care for those who are the most vulnerable in our society, as far as is practicable to do so.
3. Notwithstanding RMC understands that amongst its residents, there will be people of varying levels of physical and mental health, there is a limit to the amount of care RMC can give to students with extra needs (both physical and mental). Those students requiring extra support are defined in this Guideline as "High Support Needs Residents" (**HSN Residents**), whether they meet this definition on entering RMC, or during their term of residency.
4. RMC recognises that mental health is a spectrum, and an individual will move along the spectrum at various times during their life. Mental health professionals have noted that young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 are at a higher risk of poor mental health. RMC is aware that a percentage of residents may have mental health issues, and RMC seeks to be a place that cares for residents with these issues as far as it is able.
5. However, RMC also acknowledges that mental health is generally best treated by professionals, with a combination of psychological and medical treatment. As RMC has connections with a range of different mental health professionals, it encourages and supports our residents, and HSN Residents, to access assistance when necessary.
6. RMC is also required to care for, and protect, residents other than HSN Residents and those who provide care to our residents. In particular, Residential Advisors (**RAs**) and staff can bear a significant load in caring for HSN Residents. RMC has developed this Guideline Policy to assist in assessing the level of support it is able to provide to HSN Residents.
7. Our policy objective is to care for those who require extra support from RMC in order to be part of our community, whilst simultaneously caring for and protecting the staff, RAs and other residents from facing demands for care that they cannot meet. RMC strives to strike a balance between supporting and protecting our RAs, staff and RMC community and supporting and protecting our residents. Should circumstances arise whereby RMC cannot continue the necessary level of care for a HSN Resident, discussions will take place between the resident, the resident's family/guardian or nominated contact person and RMC to resolve the situation.
8. This Guideline Policy is made in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) ("**Act**")

PROCEDURE

1. ***Disclosure and Identification of a potential High Support Needs Resident***

- (a) On applying to be a member of RMC, the potential resident applicant is required to disclose if he/she is aware that he/she has physical or mental health problems, either current or historical, which may constitute either or both Sensitive Information or Personal Information under the Act.
- (b) All potential resident applicants must disclose a Contact Person, who will be his/her parents, or guardian, or other nominated person, who the Dean and/or Master may contact if in their discretion they consider it is necessary to obtain further details or information, or give details or information concerning the potential resident applicant's physical or mental health problem.
- (c) Refusal to disclose or identify current or historical physical or mental health problems, of which the potential resident applicant is aware at the time of applying, may result in the application to be a member of RMC being refused or the Accommodation Agreement being terminated.

2. ***Resident may request extra support***

- (a) If a resident feels in need of extra support he/she should make that request to his/her RA, staff member or to the Dean.
- (b) If the resident considers that the support is urgent, he/she should contact the Dean, or in the absence of the Dean, the Master urgently.

3. ***RA/staff member/resident report***

- (a) The RA or staff member should report to the Dean, or if the Dean is unavailable, to the Master, if she/he has concerns about a resident's wellbeing and requires extra support, whether or not this has been previously disclosed or identified, because of Behavior, Personal Issues, or Referral from Campus Wellbeing.
- (b) **Behaviour** – RMC recognises that a resident may require extra support, and significant mental health or relational problems may be involved, when a resident consistently exhibits behaviour which include, but are not limited to, behaviour that:
 - i. Is impeding the normal function of the RA or staff member;
 - ii. Is impeding the normal function of other residents on their floor/Block or in RMC more broadly;
 - iii. Is causing significant disruptions to the good functioning of their floor/Block community;
 - iv. Is impacting negatively on other residents' studies, or on the particular resident's studies;
 - v. Is impacting negatively on their social life;
 - vi. Is displaying repeated irrational, abnormal or unwelcome/unnecessary extraordinary behaviour, including but not limited to
 - A. Repeated phone calls/contact/texting/social media messaging to other residents, RAs or staff;

- B. Frequent unnecessary late-night contact of the RA or other residents;
 - C. Constantly following someone around in an endeavour to have a conversation, or to continue a conversation;
 - D. Perceived inability to be left alone;
 - E. Repeated disciplinary problems;
 - F. Total withdrawal when usually sociable.
- (c) **Personal Issues** - RMC recognises that a resident may require extra support when a resident is experiencing personal issues, including but not limited to:
- (1) Death of a family member or close friend, particularly when that death is unexpected;
 - (2) Significant relational breakdown;
 - (3) Significant university or academic struggles, including failing subjects;
 - (4) Financial difficulties;
 - i. Death of a family member or close friend, particularly when that death is unexpected;
 - ii. Significant relational breakdown;
 - iii. Significant university or academic struggles, including failing subjects;
 - iv. Financial difficulties;
- (d) **Referral from Campus Wellbeing** - RMC recognises that a resident may require extra support, and the Dean is to be informed when a resident
- (1) visits Campus Wellbeing at Macquarie University and may receive treatment or referrals from Campus Wellbeing; or
 - (2) may be referred by Campus Wellbeing back to RMC;
- (e) After the Dean and/or the Master have considered the report from the RA or staff member it will be in the discretion of the Dean and/or the Master whether there is an increased need for support for the resident concerned, including whether there is a need to create a Wellness Action Plan.

4. ***Creating a Wellness Action Plan***

When a resident is identified as being a potential HSN Resident, the Dean will meet with the resident to assess whether to implement a written Wellness Action Plan (**WAP**) or to pursue a different outcome. In the absence of the Dean, the Master will be responsible for ensuring that the following process takes place.

(a) **Caring for the resident: Preparing a WAP**

Where a WAP already exists:

- i. The Dean will request that a copy of the WAP be provided to RMC. That WAP will be kept confidential with access only by the Master and the Dean, and the HSN Resident's health care professionals. Discrete parts of the WAP may be shared with the RAs only in order to facilitate the implementation of the WAP.
- ii. The Dean and/or Master has the discretion to provide a copy of the early warning signs of a deterioration in the HSN Resident's health to relevant members of RMC.
- iii. The Dean will require the resident to give written permission for the Dean and/or the Master to discuss the resident's wellbeing with their treating mental health professionals or relevant members of RMC.
- iv. RMC may, where appropriate, contact the resident's mental health professionals, or if there are no appointed mental health professionals, contact Campus Wellbeing and/or RMC's counsellor (if any) in order to help support the resident.

The WAP should contain, but is not limited to, the following:

- i. What the resident can do to stay healthy.
- ii. What are the resident's early warning signs of a deterioration in mental or physical health?
- iii. Who are the resident's support people?
- iv. What is the resident's crisis plan?
- v. What is the resident's post-crisis plan?

(b) **Where a WAP does not exist**

The HSN Resident will be required to prepare a WAP. The Dean may assist in this process, or require that another professional be involved. Once completed the provisions in clause 5(a) will apply.

(c) **Caring for the community**

When a resident is identified as being a HSN Resident, the Dean will meet regularly with the resident's RA to determine the impact the resident is having upon the college community, to ensure the RA is receiving sufficient support, maintaining self-care and establishing clear boundaries with the HSN Resident.

(d) **Wellness Action Plan and the resident**

The Dean, or another appropriate member of staff, will meet with the resident as required to ensure that their WAP is being appropriately followed.

5. Monitoring and evaluating RMC's level of care

- (a) Once the WAP is written, RMC expects to see evidence that the plan is operational and is being followed.
- (b) Failure by a resident to comply with this Guideline Policy may be considered a failure to observe the terms of the Accommodation Agreement.

- (c) If in the judgment of the Dean and/or Master the WAP is not being adequately followed, the Dean and/or Master has the discretion to require the resident to leave RMC either temporarily or permanently and may allow RMC to terminate the Accommodation Agreement. RMC does this out of care for the resident (because the resident's wellbeing is at risk), and/or out of care for RMC's community (because the impact on others is too high).

Adopted by the Board of RMC on 21 May 2018.

Lifeline Telephone: 13 11 44

Beyond Blue Telephone: 1300 224 636