

THE
P/NNACLE
FOUNDATION

ABN 81 127 662 604

Scholar Care

Commitment

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Purpose

This policy explains The Pinnacle Foundation's commitment to supporting the wellbeing of its scholars.

Application

All Pinnacle staff and volunteers (including mentors) must be aware of and act in a manner that is consistent with Pinnacle's commitment to supporting the wellbeing of scholars.

This commitment applies to all Pinnacle interactions with scholars, including during the following stages:

- Scholar selection – all stages from advertisement to application, as well as the interview processes and notification of unsuccessful applicants
- Induction
- Mentor selection and support
- Setting expectations of scholars; and
- Determining Pinnacle responses to any concerns about scholars.

The Commitment

Sex and gender-diverse people, as a population, are known to experience more mental health issues than the general population.

Scholars selected by Pinnacle from this population may have a pre-existing mental health issue or may develop one during the course of their involvement with Pinnacle. In the situation where scholar mental health concerns, risks or hazards come to the attention of a Pinnacle mentor, staff member or other volunteer it is important that an appropriate response is provided.

Consistent with our purpose and values, Pinnacle is committed to support the mental health and wellbeing of the sex and gender-diverse community, including through ensuring all our interactions with scholars are respectful and appropriate, and staff and volunteers are supported to respond to any concerns about mental health.

Pinnacle, its mentors, staff and other volunteers must exercise reasonable care in their interactions with scholars and respond appropriately.

Resources to be Provided

It is important to recognise that Pinnacle is not a provider of health services, mental health or otherwise, and thus does not have any therapeutic or medical relationship with scholars.

Pinnacle will, however, provide resources and support to staff and volunteers about mental health issues, which may include referrals to appropriately qualified professionals or the support outlined in Appendix 1.

Applying the Commitment

Pinnacle, its mentors, staff and other volunteers must be mindful of the need to interact with scholars in a manner which is respectful and appropriate.

All mentors, staff and other volunteers must be familiar with the information resources, policies, procedures and practices provided by Pinnacle to assist mentors, staff and other volunteers to identify and sensitively respond to any concerns regarding scholars' mental health.

Appendix

This appendix lists a non-exhaustive range of measures that could be considered to show what might be done to support the wellbeing of scholars, many of which are already in place:

Preventative measures include:

- Careful consideration of handling and storing sensitive personal information
- Designing application forms, interviews, induction and other encounters with scholars being mindful of scholars' perceptions and experiences
- Making sure that mentors are clearly informed about the steps to take if they have any concerns about scholar mental health and highlighting the need for action when there are reasons for serious concern
- Providing mental health and well-being related resources, including emergency phone numbers, to scholars and mentors
- Regular 'check-in' contact with scholars by mentors and the Scholar Manager or Scholar Manager designate
- Providing a Scholar Manager who is skilled and readily available to scholars
- Providing awareness training to scholars, mentors, volunteers and staff of the mental health risks experienced by LGBTIQ+ people and highlighting some of the key warning signs of poor mental health
- Encouraging scholar networking such that they might share health and well-being concerns with each other
- Identifying appropriate services and resources so that scholars raising mental health issues with Pinnacle staff/mentors/other volunteers can be directed to clinical service providers
- Ensuring mentors are aware of and understand the extent of their duty of care.

Responsive measures include:

- A clear and graded escalation process if mental health-related concerns are raised
- Seeking consent of the scholar wherever possible before taking steps to contact or otherwise involve others from outside Pinnacle, noting that there may be rare and exceptional circumstances where there is a need to act without consent or discussion with the scholar, to be assessed on the basis of risk to the scholar and in accordance with Pinnacle policy
- Mentoring guidelines addressing/responding to scholar mental health, wellbeing and safety.

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