



Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools

SPIRITUAL CARE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS PROGRAM

What is Spiritual Care?

Spiritual Care focuses on the deep values and meanings that guide people as they live their lives. It can provide a caring and supportive presence for anyone who is anxious, confused, lonely or hurting. The presence of Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools over the years has benefited those in need and has been a positive influence in many public institutions, including schools.

Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools Program

For over three decades, spiritual care has been available for secondary school students and staff in the Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB). Individuals from various faith communities recognized by the OCDSB apply to volunteer with the Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools (SCSS) program. They participate in a double application and screening process with SCSS and the Ontario Network For Education (ONFE), are trained, and are then partnered with schools who wish to participate in the program. SCSS volunteers, called Spiritual Care Volunteers, provide spiritual care for the school community on personal, social, or spiritual matters.

Guidelines for this service were reviewed and updated in 2001-2002 and 2017-2018 by the SCSS Steering Committee in consultation and communication with representatives of school administrators, student councils, the Community Council on Ethnocultural Equity and the Coordinator for Spiritual Care in

Secondary Schools and in 2022 by the Coordinator for SCSS and Steering Committee Co Chair.

Who are Spiritual Care Volunteers?

Spiritual Care volunteers are caring individuals of various faith backgrounds with gifts and experience in spiritual care, whose participation in the SCSS program is encouraged by their faith community. Though maintaining their own faith understanding, Spiritual Care Volunteers are mindful not to impose it on others, reflecting a stance of respect for the rights, beliefs, and traditions of others.

Spiritual Care Volunteers strive to practise and share values based on personal integrity, compassion for others, and respect for the rights, beliefs and traditions of all people. They offer an unbiased, caring space that assists both staff and students in supporting their spiritual health. Spiritual Care volunteers work in partnership with Principals and Guidance departments or other members of staff, offering support and resources as needed. They also communicate on a monthly or as-needed basis with the SCSS Coordinator.

Spiritual Care Volunteers are trained on topics such as active listening, respectful approach, empathy, navigating difficult conversations, and have the opportunity to participate in at least two continuing education workshops or training sessions per school year.

Spiritual Care Volunteers may encounter questions from staff or students related to many topics including (but not limited to) self-worth, stress during exams or tests, peer pressure, difficult living circumstances, substance abuse, suicide, grief and faith. Their role is to listen and support and they have a duty to report when the situation is called for. They may also be invited by the school to provide moral and spiritual support in times of crises, such as an accident or death, and still present later, when other crisis-support people are no longer available but recurring concerns surface.

How is the Program of Spiritual Care Administered?

The Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools Steering Committee and Coordinator oversees the program for the OCDSB. While there are changes from time to time its composition may be drawn from any of the religious faith traditions that are recognized by the OCDSB.

The Steering Committee encourages and supports spiritual care by interviewing candidates who have been screened and interviewed by the Ottawa Network for Education (ONFE). The Committee also provides mentoring with experienced volunteers and the Coordinator facilitates placement in schools requesting a Spiritual Care Volunteer.

For additional information, please visit the Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools website at [Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools](#) or contact:

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