

Mental Health Program

We are thrilled to introduce a new and vital initiative aimed at improving and promoting the mental well-being of both our students and staff. Aquinas Catholic Schools recognizes the importance of mental health in education and the workplace. Therefore, we are proud to announce the launch of our comprehensive Mental Health Program, in collaboration with our trusted partner, Driftless Recovery Services.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A PK-12 MENTAL HEALTH TEAM

Aquinas Catholic Schools has appointed Mrs. Rachel Feehan and Mr. Mike Desmond to lead the support team. The purpose of the Mental Health Committee is to promote the mental well-being of our students, faculty, and staff by raising awareness, providing resources, and advocating for policies that enhance access to mental health services and reduce stigma. Our goal is to create a supportive and inclusive environment where individuals can seek help, find solace, and thrive emotionally and mentally.

MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

Under the supervision of Driftless Recovery Services, Rachel Feehan will be Aquinas Catholic School's full time mental health counselor, providing individual and group counseling to students. Additionally, Driftless Recovery Services will serve as consultants and a point of referral.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

Staff members will have access to employee assistance programs coordinated by Driftless Recovery Services. Staff will have the opportunity utilize counseling services on campus or off-site via Driftless Recovery Services.

MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHOPS AND STAFF TRAINING

Aquinas Catholic Schools Mental Health Team in coordination with Driftless Recovery Services will organize workshops and training sessions on various mental health topics for staff, students, and families. These events will cover topics such as:

- Stress, anxiety, depression, and suicide prevention
- Crisis intervention
- Healthy relationships
- Social media
- Trauma
- Substance use

Aquinas Catholic Schools will foster a positive mental health environment within our schools and workplace and work collaboratively to ensure that all teachers and school staff are provided training on recognizing signs of mental health struggles. This training will provide them with the tools to offer support and seek help when necessary.

PARENT AND CAREGIVER SUPPORT

Aquinas Catholic Schools Mental Health Team in coordination with Driftless Recovery Services will lead special sessions for parents and caregivers to help them understand and support their children's and family's mental health needs. Similarly, resources and support for the families of our staff will also be offered.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

Aquinas Catholic Schools, in collaboration with Driftless Recovery Services, will launch awareness campaigns to reduce stigma surrounding mental health, emphasizing the importance of seeking help when needed. These campaigns will be aimed at both students and staff.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES

A dedicated web page on our school district's website will provide access to a wide range of mental health resources, including help lines, crisis support, and recommended readings.

We are committed to making our schools not only centers of learning but also places where everyone can grow emotionally, socially, spiritually, and mentally. This Mental Health Program, in partnership with Driftless Recovery Services, is a significant step in this direction.

MIKE DESMOND

Director of Mental Health Services

Mike Desmond (AHS Class of '71) has a Masters Degree in Education with a concentration on Psychology and Guidance from UW-L. He has 25 years of experience as a psychology teacher at Aquinas and over 20 years actively involved in mental health issues in the community.

He currently serves as the President of the Mental Health Coalition of Greater La Crosse, an advocacy group supporting mental health education, training, and providing resources. Mike also served as the Executive Director of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse, where a mental health program was established that served as a model for Boys and Girls Clubs nationally.



RACHEL FEEHAN

Clinical Mental Health Counselor

Rachel Feehan (AHS Class of '09) earned both a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology and a Masters degree in Mental Health Counseling with a specialization in Child and Adolescent Counseling from Viterbo University. Rachel completed a practicum experience at The Salvation Army of La Crosse County, internships at Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center in School-Linked Mental Health and at Peace of Mind Counseling, LLC in Outpatient/Play Therapy. In 2019, Rachel was awarded the opportunity to present her research on Screen Time and Social Media Use at the Wisconsin Counseling Association Annual Conference.

For the past nine years, Rachel has worked at Aquinas Catholic Schools, most recently operating as a School Counselor and Director of 7-12 Counseling.

