



GUIDANCE FOR DISTANCE LEARNING OKLAHOMA SCHOOL COUNSELORS

We are all facing unique challenges in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and we acknowledge, as school counselors, you are well-equipped with the tools needed to establish creative and evidence-based plans for your students in the distance learning space. Amidst it all, please remember your students are lucky to have you in their corner.

We are here to support you in this difficult time. Please reach out to us with questions or resource needs.

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DISTANCE LEARNING PLATFORM CONSIDERATIONS

Be mindful of district guidance regarding approved virtual distance learning platforms. Before you take any action, consult with your district regarding any guidance parameters to ensure your actions align with the school and district mandates.

DISTANCE LEARNING SCHOOL COUNSELING POTENTIAL

BENEFITS

- Sense of safety can occur as students can participate from their own domain/space
- Access
- Preference to write and type
- When online, some individuals self disclose more frequently
- Creative use of technology outlets can enhance SEL (Social Emotional Learning)
- Today's teens *may* prefer a virtual platform over face-to-face

CHALLENGES

- Privacy
- Technology issues
- Nonverbal cues and some observable insights could be missed
- Not all issues are suitable for the online environment
- Potential increases in student self-disclosure



COUNSELING STUDENTS IN VIRTUAL DISTANCE LEARNING

- ❑ Consider how your ethical and legal obligations inform your virtual school counseling strategy. [EthicalStandards2016.pdf](#)
- ❑ Recognize and mitigate the limitations of virtual school counselor confidentiality, which may include unintended viewers or recipients. Take steps to ensure confidentiality in your virtual space. Be mindful that you have no control over the student's virtual space.
- ❑ Educate students on how to participate in the virtual school counseling relationship in order to minimize and prevent potential misunderstandings that could occur. Misunderstandings could occur due to lack of verbal cues and difficulty reading body language or other visual cues that provide contextual meaning to the school counseling process and school counseling relationship.
- ❑ Implement procedures for students to follow in both emergency and nonemergency situations when the school counselor is not available.
- ❑ To the extent possible, inform both the student and parent/guardian of the benefits and limitations of virtual school counseling.
- ❑ Consider the importance of routine in creating a sense of normalcy for students.

BEST PRACTICES FOR VIRTUAL DISTANCE SCHOOL COUNSELING

- ❑ Email students and parents/guardians signifying the hours the school counselor will monitor email
- ❑ If using virtual classroom platforms, post office hours for student and parent/guardian awareness
- ❑ If possible, do not use personal devices
- ❑ Utilize *67 or Google Voice if using a personal phone
- ❑ Document all student/parent interactions
- ❑ Focus on relationships and helping students maintain a sense of connectedness
- ❑ Personal social media platforms are not an appropriate avenue of communication with students. Please consult with your district on the approved use of social media platforms
- ❑ **Be mindful of resources shared.**
 - Are the resources from a reputable source?
 - Are the strategies and interventions that you are sharing evidence-based?
 - If tools are offered free for a limited time, what is your plan for ongoing coaching?



HANDLE THESE SITUATIONS THE SAME AS ON-SITE SETTINGS

SUICIDAL IDEATION

The only knowledge you need to meaningfully act on is an expressed, implied, veiled, peer-reported or rumored suicidal ideation.

- ❑ Contact the local police department immediately to conduct a welfare check
- ❑ Contact parent/guardian
- ❑ Consult with site administration
- ❑ Document actions taken
- ❑ Provide resources to students as appropriate

CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT

The only knowledge you need to meaningfully act on is if you **suspect** a child is being neglected or abused, **report any concerns immediately**. [OKDHS Reporting Resource](#)

- ❑ Promptly contact OKDHS Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-521-3511
- ❑ Document the referral number
- ❑ Follow subsequent district guidelines for documentation

RESOURCES

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Call 800-273-8255 or [Chat with Lifeline](#)

Crisis Textline Text TALK to 741741

MY3 App [Suicide Prevention App for Safety Planning](#)

Disaster Distress Helpline (SAMHSA) Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746

CDC video for explaining COVID-19 to younger students (Elementary)

[Elementary Video](#)

Oklahoma School Counselor Association COVID-19 resources

[Covid-19-Resources](#)

United States Department of Education

[FERPA and Coronavirus FAQ's](#)

American School Counselor Association: Planning for Virtual/Distance School Counseling

[EmergencyShutdown.pdf](#)

American School Counselor Association Position on Virtual School Counseling

[ASCA Position Statement](#)

WestEd Database of Resources to Share with Parents and School Staff

[COVID-19 Resources](#)

VIRTUAL SPACE WEBINAR SUPPORT

Brian Coleman National School Counselor of the Year 2019 [WEBINAR LINK](#)