VIRTUAL SCHOOL COUNSELLING RESOURCE

Responsibilities & Rights

british columbia
school counsellors association
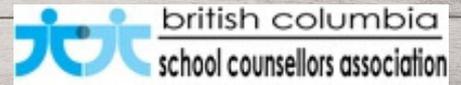
The following document is part of collection of resources created by the B.C. School Counsellors Association.

The purpose of providing this resource is to ensure school counsellors offer an effective, safe and secure service, while minimizing risk and protecting the students and families we support.

The _USE_ of this document (formatting&content or content only) should _ONLY OCCUR AFTER_ a professional _COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSION_ and _CONSULTATION_ with your administrator.

Additionally, it important to ensure the _integration_ of any of the recommendations/suggestions contained in this document be _compliant with School District guidelines & policies_ regarding, security, privacy and the use of approved technologies.

Collaboration is a process not a destination!

Virtual School Counselling
Implementation Kit

Table of Contents

WORKFLOW: A STEP BY STEP APPROACH

	Department Notes
Team engagement – School Counselling and Supervisors are key to success ✓ Consider internal meetings to discuss the changes, workflow, and responsibilities.	
Obtaining and recording student/parents/guardians email addresses and mobile numbers ✓ Email addresses can be used for communicating new virtual school counselling services to groups of student/parents/guardians, as well as sending the virtual session's link/URL to individual student/parents/guardians. ✓ Mobile numbers are useful for communicating with student/parents/guardians if there are any issues with the virtual sessions, or to ensure they are ready for their sessions.	
Informing student/parents/guardians about the new virtual school counselling service ✓ Consider you are using an email platform that is complaint with school district guidelines and policies, which will enable you to email groups of student/parents/guardians with information about the new virtual school counselling services. ✓ For an example, see the Student/parents/guardians Communication section in this Toolkit. ✓ Allowing student/parents/guardians to email back to the department ✓ Consider setting up a new email address to allow student/parents/guardians to send emails to the department.	
Student/parents/guardians FAQs ✓ Consider creating an FAQ document for your student/parents/guardians. E.g. This could include how to book virtual sessions, technical tips, troubleshooting, student/parents/guardians etiquette, etc. See the Student/parents/guardians Communication section in this Toolkit.	

Obtaining student/parents/guardians consent

- ✓ School Counsellors providing services via video sessions should obtain student/parents/guardians consent for this specific purpose.

- ✓ **If you are concerned that parental consent is not being provided in a circumstance where it is in a child's best interest to have access to a school counsellor, raise this with your administrator.**

- ✓ BCSCA recommends the use of a signed parent informed consent form for when working with students under 12 years of age, click here for the Word doc, and click here for the PDF version.

- ✓ Consider paper vs. electronic forms.

- ✓ In some situations, obtaining a written consent might be difficult, verbal consent documented in student's file is also acceptable as long as it covers the details.

- ✓ Short statement to initiate a Virtual School counselling session with student, which has been approved by the BCSCA:

"Just like online shopping/ gaming or email, Virtual School Counselling has some inherent privacy and security risks that your personal information may be intercepted or unintentionally disclosed. We want to make sure you understand this before we proceed. In order to improve privacy and confidentiality, you should also take steps to participate in this virtual session in a private setting and you should know that if you use someone else's computer/device as they may be able to access your information.

If you want more information, please check the link on our [website/confirmation email/etc.]. If it is determined you require more intensive support you will be referred to an appropriate community resource. After the referral, the type/frequency of support you receive from your school counsellor MAY change. We will discuss this with you... You should also understand that virtual school counselling is not a substitute for attending the Emergency Department if urgent mental health care is needed. Are you ok to continue?"

✓ Recording consent in the student's file	
✓ Consider where to record the student consent in their file	
✓ Department's should develop a standard process for collecting consent, documenting in student, and keeping track.	
✓ Recording verbal consent in a student's file.	
✓ Copy and paste the following into the student's chart:	
Example: *Informed verbal consent was obtained from these student/parents/guardians to communicate with and receive school counselling services using virtual and other telecommunications tools. This student/parent/guardian has been explained the risks related to unauthorized disclosure or interception of personal information and steps they can take to help protect their information. We have discussed that school counselling provided through video or audio communication cannot replace the need for specialized/intensive support for some mental health disorders or urgent problems and student/parents/guardians understands the need to seek urgent care in an Emergency Department as necessary.*	
Student/parents/guardians suitability	
✓ Consider which student/parents/guardians are suitable for virtual sessions. Reviewing your schedule over the last week could help with identifying potential student/parents/guardians sessions	
Schedule planning	
✓ Consider specific days and time slots for virtual sessions. How will this work with existing schedules?	
✓ Consider creating multiple types of appointments for a virtual session. (e.g. phone session, chat, video conferencing, etc)	
Booking virtual sessions	
✓ Consider how student/parents/guardians can book virtual sessions. Consider using a virtual tool like https://calendly.com/ to allow student/parents/guardians to book session times.(be sure it is complaint with school district guidelines)	
✓ Consider creating a FAQ document/webpage for student/parents/guardians to answer those frequently asked questions for in person or virtual sessions.	

Setting up the room	
✓ Consider placement of video screen. Is the space private and free of distractions? Essential items include: webcam, microphone and speaker.	
Virtual session etiquette	
✓ Consider the space that the student/parents/guardians will view during a virtual session.	
✓ Consider clarifying your actions to the student/parents/guardians if you are not looking at them. E.g. creating notes on your computer or notebook.	
Starting a virtual sessions	
✓ Consider how to ensure the students/parents/guardians is ready for their virtual sessions.	
✓ Check in to see if this is a good time to begin the session	
✓ Review limits of confidentiality and duty to report	
✓ Confirm the person is in a space that will allow an appropriate amount of privacy	
✓ Confirm if anyone will be participating or present during the session	
Sessions notes	
✓ Consider having a standard method for recording in your notes that the session was conducted over video.	
Sending documents	
✓ While working away from your worksite, consider how to maintain safe and secure storage of your documents	
✓ Consider the "behind 2 locks" principle (i.e. password protected device and password protected electronic file)	
Follow-up sessions	
✓ Consider the workflow for arranging a follow-up sessions for the student/parents/guardians. What are the instructions for the student/parents/guardians?	

STUDENT/PARENTS/GUARDIANS COMMUNICATION

✓ With the popularity of smart phones and video chat, many of your student/parents/guardians may be familiar with the basic functions needed to enable virtual school counselling sessions. Still, it is important to clearly communicate with them so they know what to expect, what the benefits are and how they can get started with virtual school counselling.

✓ This guide provides useful templates and tools that will help student/parents/guardians learn how to connect with you using virtual school counselling on their smart phone, laptop or tablet.

EQUIPMENT ESSENTIALS AND TESTING

EQUIPMENT ESSENTIALS

✓ For a virtual visit the computer, laptop, tablet, or smart phone you are using needs to have:

- o Webcam
- o Microphone
- o Speaker
- o Headphone with built in microphone is preferred *(eliminates others from hearing voice of student)*

TESTING YOUR EQUIPMENT

✓ It is important to test the hardware to ensure your webcam, microphone and speaker are all working and it also helps to be familiar with how to adjust the settings as well.

TESTING THE SPEED OF YOUR INTERNET CONNECTION

✓ Run an online speed test from the room you would use for video consults to find out the internet speed. Use the equipment you are planning to use for the most accurate test. You can use the site (https://www.speedtest.net/).

PROMOTING VIRTUAL SCHOOL COUNSELLING IN YOUR DEPARTMENT

✓ Choose a date to start using virtual school counselling in your department.

✓ Let student/parents/guardians know that the service will be available by providing information on your website, via email, via various social media channels.

✓ Consider outlining the process of signing up for virtual school counselling on your website, *along with a list of the concerns/issues that are appropriate for a virtual session. Be sure to* highlight your FAQ document/page as a resource for support and answers.

✓ The Virtual School counselling - Quick Start Guide for Student/parents/guardians PDF also provides tips and tricks. (editable document found on BCSCA website)

EMAIL TEMPLATE EXAMPLE: - INTRODUCTION FOR STUDENT/PARENTS/GUARDIANS

EXAMPLE: *In order to expand our services and availability to student/parents/guardians, our department will be introducing virtual school counselling sessions as of [Date]. Student/parents/guardians will now be able to connect with their school counsellor from the location of their choosing, using their smartphone, computer or tablet...*

Check out the Virtual School counselling - Quick Start Guide for Student/parents/guardians PDF for more information about how to access this new service.

To sign up for a virtual school counselling sessions, refer to our [Website] for appointment availability and department hours. For questions or assistance with troubleshooting, please contact the department at [Department Phone] or [Email].

EMAIL SIGNATURE DISCLAIMER EXAMPLE: WHEN SENDING EMAILS TO STUDENT/PARENTS/GUARDIANS

DISCLAIMER: *Please note, we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of information transmitted through e-mail. Please be aware of this limitation when contacting us.*

EMAIL SIGNATURE DISCLAIMER EXAMPLE: - SESSIONS EMAIL INVITATION

✓ Consider including the following disclaimer in your virtual school counselling invite emails or website pages:

DISCLAIMER: *This virtual school counselling sessions, email invite and any attachment(s) is/are for authorized use by the intended recipient(s) only and must not be read, distributed, disclosed, used or copied by anyone else. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender immediately, disconnect and delete any attachment(s). Student/parents/guardians may be redirected to the department for an in person session at any time if the concern is deemed not appropriate for virtual school counselling. Thank you.*

PRIVACY AND SECURITY SAFEGUARDS

SESSION SAFEGUARDS

✓ Always **ensure the student is ready** to have a confidential conversation. When appropriate, start video session with clear introductions and confirming the student's identity.

✓ Conduct the video session in a **private space in both yours and the student/parents/guardians' location**. Using a phone or other mobile device in public could compromise the student/parents/guardians' confidentiality. During the session, check if the volume is set to an appropriate but discreet level. Consider using a headset with a built in mic to eliminate others from hearing the voice of the person speaking.

✓ Student/parents/guardians may want to include a family member during the video support.. If so, **be aware of who is in the room with the student.** Establish the level of student/parents/guardians' comfort and follow the same principles as with in-person sessions.

✓ **Do not leave connection unattended** and/or set on automatic call answering. Once the session is over, all participants are expected to disconnect from the call immediately.

✓ **If possible, set up a waiting room**, use separate passwords for each student session, and make sure you schedule enough time between sessions that you do not have inadvertent overlap. If you use the same videoconferencing invite for multiple students you risk having a student sign in while a session is ongoing with another student.

TECHNOLOGY SAFEGUARDS

- ✓ Refrain from using any unsecured public networks. When setting up **a wireless connection** in your department, use an adequate password that is shared only with adults in alternate work location.

- ✓ Updates and security patches should be applied as they are made available by the software vendor. Ensure the **device used for videoconferencing is not obsolete** and software is current so the **most recent updates can be applied.**

- ✓ All devices used for videoconferencing, and the sessions themselves, should be **password protected** to prevent accidental configuration changes or hacking attempts. Do not use default settings and be sure to create adequate passwords.

- ✓ **Avoid recording videoconference sessions** containing personal information unless it is absolutely necessary. If a recording must be made, you must seek informed consent from the person you are working with, or the person entitle to provide such consent. Implement security measures such a password protected secure storage location, when using personal, mobile and desktop devices

- ✓ Generally advisable NOT record students during a video session.

- ✓ **Disable cameras and microphones when not in use**, either by disconnecting power, connection cables, and/or using lens coverage.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

WHICH VIRTUAL SCHOOL COUNSELLING TOOL SHOULD I CHOOSE?

- ✓ There are many different virtual school counselling platforms on the market that will vary with respect to cost, functionality, privacy and security, workflow and user interface. There are also differences in the device requirements to run a tool (e.g. Windows operating system only) and whether any downloads are required (web-based vs. app-based), which can impact workflows and accessibility. You should check your School District Technology information and guidelines to find out what tools are available or approved in your School District. We recommend speaking with your colleagues, BCSCA, and your school district supervisor before you start using any particular platform.

HOW DO I ENSURE THAT THE DEVICE I AM USING FOR VIRTUAL SCHOOL COUNSELLING IS SECURE?

- ✓ You should ensure the device used for videoconferencing is not obsolete and software is current so the most recent updates can be applied. Furthermore, all devices should be password protected using a complex password.

WILL THIS TOOLKIT BE UPDATED?

- ✓ Yes, this Toolkit will continue to be updated over time, please check back on the BC School Counsellors website for the most recent version.

For more information, guidance, or support please contact: BC School Counsellors