



***From In-School to Distance Learning:
Delivering Your School Counseling Program
TIP SHEET for Directors/Supervisors***



As director/supervisor of a school counseling department, how can you support your staff and provide leadership through this crisis? NYSSCA has gathered ideas to help with the challenges we are facing, especially supporting the transition from in-school to distance learning. This is not a complete list, but information to get you started systematically with current school counseling program regulations and national standards in mind. *Kristen M. Shearer, VP Directors/Supervisors*

District policies: Begin with your district’s COVID-19 Response Plan to provide the foundation for department activities. This includes district decisions on: *“mechanisms for ongoing communications with staff, students, families, and communities during this time of closure,”* as well as, *“alternative instructional options (electronic and non-electronic).* Be mindful of the technology your staff uses and keep your team within the rules.

Regular meetings: Continue the meeting pattern you would normally use to help normalize the situation. Department and individual check-ins are essential to keep your team working together. Individual check-ins with each of your staff will help you troubleshoot issues. Your staff need a way to reach you quickly as things come up. Meeting regularly provides an anchor for staff, a place to bring concerns and facilitate their continued work as a team.



Clarify expectations: There are limits to what any of us can manage to do in a day. Caseloads and program expectations can quickly become overwhelming. Our counselors need clear expectations of what is expected of them, as well as ideas on how to meet those expectations. Accountability may need to take new forms, but is still needed. Expecting staff to keep a calendar or excel log will provide data on department accomplishments as well as help you identify and support any staff struggling with the changes. Data will likely be the only way to represent the hard work being done by your department in ways even more invisible to others in the district.

Training to work virtually: Technology is a fundamental component to your program now, but not everyone has the same comfort nor skill level. Survey your staff and identify who needs training and support, as well as who has technological strengths. Put staff strengths to good use and encourage peer support and tutoring so that the team may collectively work together. Arrange access to trainings such as ASCA’s recorded webinars on virtual counseling. *See ASCA COVID-19 Resources in Related Resources (below).* You can also become personally more familiar with distance learning technology that could increase available options for your staff. *See NYSED: technology and non-technological options under Related Resources (below).*



Supporting department staff: In these times, less is definitely more. Be as concise as you can, and take time to praise and communicate beyond the task at hand. Ensure that collectively we’re taking care of ourselves and each other. Find ways to show your appreciation. Especially, look for ways to remove barriers. If someone is having trouble with their home computer, work at getting them a school laptop. Recognize when staff are working while having small children at home. Acknowledge, support, appreciate.

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Staff that have been providing supervision to school counseling interns may have concerns with how to continue this important professional activity. Your support will be key in helping your staff fulfill this obligation. Consider including interns in regular staff meetings so they are fully aware of the parameters everyone needs to work within. Help secure parent permission for interns to continue meeting by phone with students they were already familiar with. Utilize interns' current knowledge for ideas on transforming the program from in-person to virtual.

What about the program? Assist your staff with triaging both student needs and program activities. How will you keep the continuity of your program intact while letting some activities go? What program activities previously done in person lend themselves to delivery by other means, such as virtual college visits? What information or message can be recorded once and emailed or posted instead of repetitive phone calls? How can we make best use of our website? What program activities can be managed through a Naviance survey? What is essential and what can we let go of?



Related Resources:

NYSSCA COVID-19 webpage: http://nyssca.org/?page_id=3253

NYSED COVID-19 webpage: <http://www.nysed.gov/coronavirus>

- **Continuity of Learning:**

- technology options: <http://www.nysed.gov/edtech/continuity-learning-technology-options>

- digital tools: <http://www.nysed.gov/edtech/digital-tools>

- non-technological options: <http://www.nysed.gov/edtech/non-technological-options>

- other education organization resources: <http://www.nysed.gov/edtech/resources-nys-organizations>

- **Message for Parents** (March 27, 2020): <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Parent-Update--Additional-Resources-and-Guidance-Regarding-Novel-Coronavirus--COVID-19-.html?soid=1110847617454&aid=yo-5E5icRSE>

- **Resources for Mental Health and Talking to Young People About COVID-19** (March 26, 2020): <http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/coronavirus/talking-about-covid-19-memo-3-26-2020.pdf>

- **Additional Guidance on Statewide School Closures** (March 17, 2020):

- <file:///E:/NYSSCA/COVID%2019/nysed-covid-19-third-guidance-3-17-20.pdf>

ASCA COVID-19 Resources: <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors/professional-development/learn-more/covid-update>

- **Ethical Considerations: School Counseling in a Virtual Setting:**

- <https://videos.schoolcounselor.org/ethics-virtual-school-counseling>

- **FAQs on virtual school counseling:** <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors/legal-ethical/faqs-virtual-school-counseling-ethics>

- **School Counseling in an Online Setting:** <https://videos.schoolcounselor.org/school-counseling-in-an-online-world>

- **Planning for Virtual/Distance School Counseling During an Emergency Shutdown:**

- <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/home/EmergencyShutdown.pdf>

ACT: <https://www.act.org/content/act/en/covid19.html>

College Board: <https://pages.collegeboard.org/collegeboard-covid-19-updates>

NACAC: <https://www.nacacnet.org/news--publications/newsroom/press-releases/nacac-update-coronavirus/>

NAFAA - National Association of Financial Aid Administrators: <https://www.nasfaa.org/covid19>

NYSFAAA – NYS Financial Aid Administrator Association: <https://www.nysfaaa.org/>

NYS HESC: <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/coronavirus>

Federal Student Aid: <https://studentaid.gov/announcements-events/coronavirus#borrower-questions>