



**Best Practices for Virtual Counseling: From Creating a Plan to Ensuring your Ethical Responsibility Presented by: Dr. Tracy Steel from Stanford Online School and Jill Cook from ASCA**

**April 10, 2020**

Q: How about continuation of services for students that already had written consents prior to the school closure? Since the platform changed, and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, do we need a new consent? And thank you for all these resources! So very helpful!

A: As a best practice, talk with your site principal for your district's plan moving forward.

Q: Do we need both separated/divorced signatures for permission slips?

A: Yes, that is a best practice but consult with your site administrator for protocol under the current circumstances.

Q: Any great suggestions to actively engage students in a lunch bunch or "kicking it with the counselor" virtual meet?

A: It can be difficult due to attrition but try to identify student leaders and have them invite their friends, create student leadership opportunities that way.

Q: Would you please provide more webinars to help us with more detailed info on the process of virtual counseling and how that would look like as far as templates and guidance we can provide students?

A: Yes, stay tuned for more webinars to address unique virtual school counseling needs

Q: Where can I listen to this again? I had screaming kids in the background and would like to listen to this great information again.

A: It will be posted on the RCEC website [www.rcec.us](http://www.rcec.us) and you can view the recorded webinar and download all the resources shared.

Q: Will there be a high school day? How do I sign up?

A: RCOE is working to create some school level-specific webinars on a weekly basis until the end of May. High School only sessions will typically take place on Thursdays at 11:00am, unless otherwise noted. Registration is on the way.

Q: Does the informed consent have to be given via a "form" or "permission slip" as this is not the way it happens in person? In addition, knowing that those students age 12 and up have confidentiality, how does that work with virtual counseling?

A: That has to be a school district decision, and some have done either an opt-in or opt-out option.

Q: My district doesn't allow me to use any video conferencing platforms to communicate with students so I currently have been sticking to email and Google Classroom. What are some additional suggestions or best practices for reaching out to students?

A: Using a quick Zoom would be one, as well as others including: recording weekly videos and sharing these videos to create opportunities for 1 on 1 connection. Maybe Google has discussion boards to capture this communication and responsiveness. Research says that students will respond but want a response too. It is also suggested to consider the number of students you are working with. Some school counselors have made short videos on YouTube with links (ex. mindfulness lessons for students and parents).

Q: We have an anonymous "hotline" where students can submit anonymous e-messages. I am hesitant to have it running during this time due to follow-up limitations. Do you have thoughts/experience with this?

A: There have been cases when the school counselor was tasked to staff a district crisis hotline but this meant being available at certain times or all the time. The school counselor who reached out felt like they didn't have the training to provide services and connections in that setting, which was different from a traditional school counseling setting. But for this question and it was something that the school offered and students knew it was a place they could receive services, I'd want to talk to the principal and see if this is something we have the capacity for, (i.e. providing students community and hotline information).

Q: Can the recorded video be requested via a subpoena if it is part of the student's record like the actual cum folder can be?

A: Yes it definitely can be.

Q: Must I comply with a parent's request for copies of any/all email communication I have received from their student?

A: Yes, anytime a student's name is a part of anything, it technically would be considered a student record (i.e. case notes) to be considered by law. There are also special spaces to consider. For example, case notes have to meet four criteria and legally those criteria aren't always upheld by law so personal case notes would have to be turned over. Anything that has a student's name or image, and anything a parent knows a student's name is on could be considered part of the student record.

Q: Can we get a link to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) protocol?

A: Here is the link to the ASCA for more information [www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org)

Q: Are we still liable to fax report after we make the call to CPS? If no fax can we email? Has the process changed a bit?

A: RCOE is looking into it and will have more information as it becomes available.

Q: Is the county starting to create an online CPS mandated reporter form. One that can be submitted online, vs faxing it in to CPS?

A: RCOE is looking into it and will have more information as it becomes available

Q: Where do we find the elementary lessons on the ASCA website that you mentioned?

A: Here is the link to the ASCA for more information [www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org). It

Q: Last slide mentioned an assignment tracker; where can we find that?

A: This resource is called "Challenge Success" from Stanford which has ideas for time management and social and emotional learning, among other things.

Q: What are your thoughts on peers one on one counseling?

A: One great resource on this topic is Laura Ross, a middle school counselor who has utilized peer networking to help students see each other in the virtual setting.

Q: What is something we can say to a district who wants to have therapists available over counselors?

A: Everyone is needed, given the fact that students and families have a lot of needs and this work cannot be done in isolation. School counselors do not provide long-term therapy. Much success has been seen when school counselors and mental health practitioners provide support for students and families, working collaboratively in the school campus setting. It is critical that school counselors work in academic, socio-emotional and college/career readiness domains. Research has shown the impact of this work on achievement, attendance and behavior. It should not be a choice and this will lead to building comprehensive services for students. An upcoming article in the Journal of School Counseling shows the impact of combining school counseling services with outside mental health agencies.

Q: I am concerned that I will be overwhelmed by the number of students that will respond once my online information is given. What should I do?

A: It's important to think critically about what you can do. Perhaps it's giving out information or creating a discussion board. Consider taking a proactive approach so that it is not always in a responsive manner.

Q: Did I get this correct, you can have a Zoom meeting then break students into smaller groups, and then bring them back to the larger group? If yes, do you have a guide for this?

A: Yes that is correct, and links to help guide this will be embedded as soon as possible.

Q: What are your thoughts about groups for our younger students' K-2<sup>nd</sup>? Note: it is very difficult to get younger students to focus on an online platform.

A: You should consider the purpose of conducting the student groups and if the group goals would be met in an online setting or if they could be met in a different way.

Q: Any strong recommendations/examples on needs assessments going out to students? Elem. MS, HS?

A: There is great resource offered by Dr. Yuri Nava, Riverside Unified School District school counselor who can be reached at [ynava@riversideunified.org](mailto:ynava@riversideunified.org). It is also important to consider the purpose of the needs assessment.

Q: Do we need to obtain permission from parents to meet with students online, via Google Hangouts?

A: It is recommended to consult with site administration for direction on best practice and course of action.

### **Tips and Tricks**

- “Your practice should drive the tech you use”
- For a needs assessment, I created a Google form, it is simple and user friendly.
- Whatever you get permission from an Admin., have it in writing such an email.
- I have a sample needs assessment if anyone needs it email me ynava@riversideunified.org
- I have a counselor website with COVID 19 resources:  
<https://sites.google.com/rcoe.us/cbkcounselor/home>