

Guidance and counseling programs are provided by the school district with the ultimate aim of improving student performance by increasing skills, helping students make adjustments, addressing problems that interfere with learning or the classroom environment, and assisting in career and college planning. Each school is directed to develop a counseling program that is date-driven and will meet the academic, career, and social/emotional developmental needs of the student population at that school with the objective of improving student performance. The program will include individual and group counseling, classroom presentations, academic advising, career development services, consultation, parent education, and other responsive services.

In addition, the counseling program will incorporate the following specific elements.

A. INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS AND OTHERS

The counseling program should operate in collaboration with teachers and others involved in educating students, including those who assist children with special needs or students who are at risk of dropping out of school or not meeting performance expectations. Input from parents and students should be sought in accordance with the school's parental involvement plan. (See policy 1310/4002, Parental Involvement.)

Each year, the principal or designee shall inform parents of the guidance and counseling services available to students. Parents will be notified of the right to opt their students out of participation in certain group academic or career guidance or personal or social counseling services of a generic nature.

B. PROVISION OF COUNSELING SERVICES

Counseling services may be provided on an individual basis or in small or large groups.

Students may seek counseling or be referred by staff or parents. School officials and teachers may recommend a counseling program to help a student meet standards of conduct and academic performance established by the board and school system administrators. If students have extensive needs or needs that go beyond the purpose of the counseling program, school counselors may refer them to community resources.

Counseling programs are most effective when voluntarily entered into by a student. Students will not be required to attend individual or small group counseling sessions to address identified significant personal issues unless agreement has been reached with the parent and student in a behavior contract, an intervention plan or, for special education students, in an individualized education plan. (See Student Behavior Policies (4300 series),

Student Progression and Placement (policy 3420), Special Education Programs/Rights of Disabled Students (policy 3520).)

C. PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS

All schools with grades six and higher will have peer-to-peer student support programs that address areas such as conflict resolution, general health and wellness, and mentoring. Schools are encouraged to implement peer-to-peer student support programs in other grades as appropriate.

D. ACADEMIC ADVISING

School counselors and other guiding adults in middle and high schools shall support equitable access to opportunities and rigorous and relevant curricula for all students. Prior to the ninth grade, students will be informed about the course requirements for regular and accelerated college entry and the availability of early graduate scholarships for those students who complete high school in three years. School counselors shall encourage ninth grade students to complete the requirements for college entry in less than four years, if feasible and appropriate.

E. NOTIFICATION OF SAFE SURRENDER LAW

School personnel shall annually provide all students in grades 9 through 12 with information on the manner in which a parent may lawfully abandon a newborn baby with a responsible person, in accordance with Article 5A of Chapter 7B of the General Statutes

F. EMPLOYEE MANDATORY REPORTING

Any staff member who is aware that a student is contemplating suicide or is otherwise suffering from an emotional or psychological crisis must immediately notify the counseling program in accordance with any rules established by the superintendent or principal.

Any counselor or other staff member who knows or has cause to suspect maltreatment of a child must report the information as provided in policy 4240/7312, Child Abuse and Related Threats to Child Safety, and as required by law.

G. CONFIDENTIALITY

Information obtained in a session with a counselor may be privileged and protected from disclosure as provided by law. A counselor cannot be required to testify concerning

privileged information unless, as provided by G.S. 8-53.4, the student waives the privilege or the court compels testimony as necessary to the proper administration of justice. The school counselor privilege does not, however, exempt the counselor from reporting child abuse as required by law and policy 4240/7312.

Any notation made by a counselor for his or her own use is a confidential document and is neither a public record nor a part of the student's record. The school is not required to share such confidential documents with parents or others except as required by law. Any document prepared by a counselor that is shared or intended to be shared with other staff is considered an educational record of the student and is available to the parent or eligible student in accordance with board policy on student records, policy 4700.

Legal References: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. 1232g; G.S. 7B-301; 7B art. 5A; 8-53.4, 110-105.4; 115C-12, -47, -400, -401; 116 art. 23; State Board of Education Policies GRAD-006, SCOS-011

Cross References: Parental Involvement (policy 1310/4002), Goals and Objectives of the Educational Program (policy 3000), Student Promotion and Accountability (policy 3420), Special Education Programs/Rights of Students with Disabilities (policy 3520), Child Abuse and Related Threats to Child Safety (policy 4240/7312), Student Behavior Policies (4300 series), Student Records (policy 4700)

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