COUNSELING

SCHOOL REOPENING TOOLKIT: COUNSELING

The purpose of the School Counseling Reopening Toolkit is to assist district leaders, school administrators, and school counselors in providing opportunities to support wellness of school staff and social, emotional, physical, and academic wellbeing of students. The guidance in this document outlines important considerations for school reentry, continuity, and sustainability of social and academic supports for an in-person, virtual distance learning environment, or hybrid approach at the beginning of the school year or in response to a potential school closure. The intention of this document is to provide guidance for academic and wellbeing supports for consideration while realizing every district and school is unique. Those most closely involved in decision making at the local level will make the most informed decisions regarding what is best for students.

All information in the document is non-regulatory guidance issued for general informational purposes only. This document is not intended to constitute legal advice. Because local school board policy and unique facts make dramatic differences in analyzing any situation, the Tennessee Department of Education advises each school district to consult with the local school board attorney for specific legal advice regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school operations.

I. Recommendations and Best Practices

District Level:

☐ The district may assess current emergency response plans with local stakeholders, district-level leaders, and other agencies.

☐ The district may assemble, identify, review, and update existing processes for students, families, and staff to access health and wellness support services (i.e. coordinated school health, social worker, school-based mental health liaison, family resource center, school nurse, McKinney-Vento liaison, and community mental and physical health agencies).

☐ The district has plans and personnel in place to lead professional development and guidance for educators to address the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students (i.e. PREPARE Training).

☐ The district may utilize a communication platform that provides school, district, and community level resources to support students and families (Translated in appropriate languages).

☐ The district should consider developing a communication plan to effectively support re-entry and reduce stigma (i.e. drafting and sharing key messages across several mediums).

☐ The district may develop a support services hotline and/or referral form to address additional needs.

☐ District may identify policies and procedures which adhere to FERPA, HIPPA, etc., on online and virtual platforms that aid in addressing mental health and wellness supports.

☐ If available, a district representative may contact additional identified community health and wellness organizations to provide supports (telehealth service options through mental health agencies, counseling programs through universities).

☐ The district may identify and coordinate with potential community partners or other local resources that would be able to assist with district plans to support schools (examples may include Centerstone, Mental Health Co-op, Department of Children's Services).

☐ Districts may choose to determine how students will have access to counseling services if your district is strictly working from a virtual platform or utilizing a blended option and inform parents/guardians about how to access those services for their students.

☐ The district may consider developing a protocol to address student crisis intervention in a distance learning setting.

☐ The district should consider detailing which counseling standards your school(s) will focus on in the elementary, middle, and high school grade bands based on needs assessment and social/emotional screening data.

☐ The district may identify the professional learning needs of school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, etc. to facilitate online professional development opportunities.

School Leaders:

☐ The school administrators have reviewed emergency response plans and specific role(s) of each member on the crisis response team.

☐ Identify the team member(s) who will be responsible for developing and implementing the school counseling/mental health plan.

☐ The school administrators have provided communication to faculty and staff members detailing how to access support services and resources.

☐ The school administrators have consulted with counselor and wellness team on staff self-care supports and check-ins.

☐ Schools should consider utilizing a universal screening process with parental consent to determine the social and emotional needs of all students. In the absence of formal screenings, school employed mental health professionals (i.e. school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, etc.) should establish regular informal check-ins with all students, especially in times of virtual learning.

☐ The school administrators have developed daily check-in platforms to communicate with staff on their wellbeing.

☐ The school is encouraged to develop a process to ensure all parent/guardian contact information (phone numbers and emails) is correct and up to date.

❏ School administrators may want to consider administering student, faculty and parent/guardian needs assessments to inform appropriate focused interventions.

☐ The school administrators may develop communication plans to disseminate re-entry plan, support services options, and ways to access supports (i.e. home visit, online platforms, and paper).

☐ The school administrators may provide adequate crisis response training to all staff to support the wellbeing of all students.

❏ School administrators may choose to consider developing schedules and procedures to ensure school counselor availability to students and parents/guardians.

❏ School administrators may work with the team to determine a referral process for all students and school staff to refer students to school based counseling services.

❏ Schools may develop a communication plan with parents/guardians and include community resources, mental health resources and school counselor and other school mental health support contact information.

❏ Schools may create a plan to communicate to parents and students regarding college and career readiness (i.e. TN Promise, college deadlines, ACT deadlines, etc.).

❏ Schools may consider working with feeder schools to plan transition activities, if none occurred before school closures.

❏ The school team should monitor school attendance and remain in contact with students who are unable to physically come to the school building even once school is open (i.e. medically vulnerable).

School Counselor:

☐ School Counselor has reviewed school discipline policy and discussed potential trauma implications (i.e. discipline, COVID stigma, neglect, racial inequities, grief, loss, etc.,) with school administration.

☐ School Counselor has worked alongside administration to develop a multi-tiered system of support to address adequate support services opportunities for students.

☐ School Counselor has worked alongside administration to develop strategies and supports for staff wellness (i.e. adult wellbeing support, tap in & tap out buddies, wellness rooms).

☐ School Counselor has provided teachers and staff adequate training that identifies potential trauma reactions.

☐ School Counselor has developed a communication template surveying the immediate needs of each family (i.e. family check-in form, online platforms, home visits, SMS options, paper communication methods).

☐ School Counselor has provided resources and strategies on how to talk with child about COVID related stigma to families.

☐ School Counselor has provided teachers and staff resources outlining healing activities for all students (i.e. daily morning meetings, mental health and wellbeing platforms, check-in/check-out).

☐ School Counselor has developed a list of families who may require daily and weekly follow-up to determine if additional services and referrals are warranted. Special consideration should be given to adhering to privacy expectations mandated within FERPA guidelines.

☐ School Counselor has assessed current comprehensive school counseling model plans and identified areas of need to shift in online platforms.

II.   Checklists by Grade Band

The bulleted checklists below identify items that should be considered to support the academic and emotional stability of student and be prioritized by districts, schools, and counselors. The checklists are not exhaustive but are intended to help prioritize and monitor the most important touchpoints.

Elementary Schools

❑ School administrators and counselors should consider working collaboratively to carefully place students to create balance academically, behaviorally, and emotionally with thought given to personalities of students and teachers. The teachers from the 2019-2020 should complete a spreadsheet for each student detailing academic information (particularly in reading, writing, and math), behaviorally, and emotionally to give greater information to those placing students. Thought should be given to extenuating circumstances for students during the time of closure who may need special placement.

❑ Schools may share whole class counseling schedule that can be delivered in person or virtually detailing regularly scheduled class times.

❑ Counselors or administrators may create small groups that can meet in person or virtually to support emotional and behavioral needs.

❑ School or district personnel may locate or create developmentally appropriate videos and resources to share with students and families.

❑ School faculty and personnel may choose to greet students at the front door of the building to create a welcoming environment upon return to school.

❑ Teachers stationed outside classroom doors to welcome students each morning may create comfort and belonging for students.

❑ Schools should consider ways "to keep eyes on students" if conducting school through distance learning such as regular video calls with teachers and/or counselors. Providing opportunities for students to openly chat during some of these times may allow students the space to talk through any concerns or supports they may need.

Middle Schools

❑ Counselors should consider working with administration to schedule a 'Middle School 101' for incoming 6th graders any new students to the building either in person or in a virtual format. This event would include everything students need to know about the school, schedules and course offerings, clubs and extracurricular opportunities, supports, contact information, etc. prior to the start of school.

❑ Counselors who work with incoming new students (6th grade, etc.) should consider consulting with their former schools to ensure adequate transitioning plans are developed if deemed necessary.

❑ Counselors should work with administration to develop ways for all students to connect with adults on a consistent basis (i.e. homeroom check-ins, morning meetings, etc.)

❑ Counselors should consider developing an effective referral tool for educators who identify students in need (i.e. online referral form).

❑ Counselors may want to work with coaches and club sponsors to ensure students are informed about the extracurricular activities available at the school.

High Schools

❑ Counselors should consider working with school administration to schedule a High School 101 for incoming 9th graders and any students new to the building either in person or in virtual video format. Information may include graduation requirements, focused elective group options, early postsecondary opportunities, clubs and extracurricular opportunities, high school expectations, support mechanisms, contact information, etc. prior to the start of school.

❑ Counselors may consider examining class schedules to ensure no student has "gaps" in his/her schedule, as well as looking at class size numbers. Even if students are beginning remotely, class size should be as balanced as possible to be prepared upon return to school.

❑ While the majority of students may have courses already selected for the 2020-21 school year, there may still be students without a schedule who need virtual meetings prior to the start of the school year. Counselors should consider reaching out to students in parents through a digital format or via phone to ensure students have enrolled for the required and preferred classes for the 2020-21 school year.

❑ Without the junior testing day in spring 2020, there should be considerations for how students are preparing for the ACT. Typically schools emphasize ACT preparation leading up to the junior test date through ACT boot camps and other study sessions to support students. Ideas for acclimating students may include sessions during the 30-minute flex period, Saturday or after-school boot camps, or online resources where a teacher or counselor is tracking student progress.

❑ Districts and schools should consider ways for adults to connect with every student regularly. Considerations include a "home room" at the beginning of the day or during the flex period where an adult is checking in on students each day, or finding ways to get "eyes and ears" on each student daily in a distance learning environment. Districts should encourage teachers to spend extra time with students monitoring whole child supports that may extend beyond academics.

❑ Counselors could work with student organizations such as Student Council to encourage students to become involved at school through athletics, clubs, honor societies, arts, career and technical student organizations, or other opportunities to connect with peers as is possible and allowable for reintegration to high school. If working in a distance learning format, consideration should be given to virtual meetings.

❑ Counselors who work with incoming new students (9th grade, etc.) should consider consulting with their former schools to ensure adequate transitioning plans are developed if deemed necessary.

❑ Counselors should consider developing an effective referral tool for educators who identify students in need (i.e. online referral form).

❑ Counselors may consult the Postsecondary Transition Toolkit for further guidance on juniors, seniors, and recent graduates.

III.   **Resources**

Universal Resources:

- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- Tennessee Commission on Children & Youth Building Strong Brains
- National Association of School Psychologists
- National Center for School Crisis & Bereavement
- Thriving Schools
- TDOE Trauma Informed Discipline Best Practices
- Student & Family Communications - Sample Text-based "Nudging" Platforms
  - Signal Vine
  - Remind
  - Possip
  - SendHub

Wellness & Self-Care Resources:

- Pure Edge
- Happy Teacher Revolution
- Sanford Harmony for Educators

Elementary Specific Resources Addressing Social/Emotional, College & Career Exploration, and Academic Supports:

- American School Counselor Association Elementary Counseling
- Restorative Justice Partners (Elementary Specific) Strategies
- Sandford Harmony
- Second Step
- Peardeck SEL Online Templates

Middle & High School Specific Resources Addressing Social/Emotional, College & Career Exploration, and Academic Supports:

- American School Counselor Association Middle School Counseling
- American School Counselor Association High School Counseling

- Restorative Justice Partners Strategies for Middle & High School Students
- Collaborative on Academic Social and Emotional Learning
- ACT Resources for Students, Teachers, Schools and Workers Impacted by COVID-19
  - ACT Testing Updates
  - Press Release: ACT to Offer Students Summer ACT Test Date Options and ACT Test Online at Home
  - Free ACT Resources – This two-page document includes test prep resources, fee waiver instructions, and more.
- Free Practice for the SAT Provided by College Board
- Electronic Transcript Exchange
  - Student Clearinghouse Guidance PDF
- Milestones for College & Career Readiness
- THEC Path to College Resources
- THEC/TSAC Virtual Financial Aid Resources

Mobile Crisis Service
A 24/7/365 response team for those who are experiencing a mental health emergency.
Agencies providing mobile crisis services:

Tennessee Association of Mental Health Organizations (TAMHO)
Provides statewide list of behavioral health services by counties. Click on the link below and then click on counties to access services in your district.

Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
Help line for securing mental health services in your area: 1-800-560-5767

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
This resource brings up a map that locates resources in your area in mental health services, substance abuse services and health care centers

Talking to Children about COVID-19
Information from the National Association of School Psychologists on helping children cope with changes resulting from COVID-19

Tennessee PREPARE: Response and Recovery
Program to assist districts and schools in advancing the response and recovery portions of their emergency management plans. This manual includes planning and guidance on restoring community on the first days back to school, typical trauma responses by developmental age, typical trauma reactions, and many other resources.

Responding to COVID-19: Brief Action Steps for School Crisis Response Teams
Information from the National Association of School Psychologists on action steps that can be taken by school crisis response teams to respond to COVID-19

Preparing for Infectious Disease Epidemics: Brief Tips for School Mental Health
Information from the National Association of School Psychologists on tips that school mental health professionals can do to prepare for responding to COVID-19 and other pandemic illnesses

Preparing for a Pandemic Illness: Guidelines for School Administrators and School Crisis Response Teams
Information from the National Association of School Psychologists for school administrators and school crisis response teams to prepare for pandemic illnesses outbreaks

Countering Coronavirus Stigma and Racism: Tips for Teachers and Other Educators
Information from the National Association of School Psychologists on tips for teachers and other educators to counter coronavirus stigma and racism

Mental Health Considerations during the COVID-19 Outbreak
World Health Organization's mental health and psychosocial considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak

Stress and Coping
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention resources on stress and coping during the outbreak of COVID-19

Talking with Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers during Infectious Disease Outbreaks (English)
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's English version of tips for caregivers, parents, and teachers during infectious disease outbreaks for talking with children

Talking with Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers during Infectious Disease Outbreaks (Spanish)
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Spanish version of tips for caregivers, parents, and teachers during infectious disease outbreaks for talking with children

Coping with Stress during Infectious Disease Outbreaks
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's fact sheet providing tips for coping with stress during an infectious disease outbreak

Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health during an Infectious Disease Outbreak (English)
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's English version fact sheet explaining social distancing, quarantine, and isolation in the event of an infectious disease outbreak

Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health: Tips for Social Distancing, Quarantine, and Isolation during an Infectious Disease Outbreak (Spanish)
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Spanish version fact sheet explaining social distancing, quarantine, and isolation in the event of an infectious disease outbreak

Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope with the Coronavirus Disease 2019
The National Child Traumatic Stress Network's parent/caregiver guide related to COVID-19.

National Association of Social Workers Coronavirus Practice
Resources to support social workers in their role in preventing the spread of COVID-19 while ensuring access to services

Considerations for School Nurses Regarding Care of Students and Staff that Become Ill at School or Arrive Sick
When schools reopen, there are key activities that school nurses should be focused on related to COVID-19, specifically regarding the care of students and staff that become ill at school or arrive sick

Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs
This interim guidance is intended for administrators of public and private child care programs and K-12 schools and will help schools, child care programs and their partners understand how to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19 within their communities and facilities

American Academy of Pediatrics COVID-19
The American Academy of Pediatrics members dedicate their efforts and resources to the health, safety and well-being of children, adolescents and young adults both at school and at home. Current information and resources on COVID-19 can be found here for all students and their families

Handwashing and Hand Sanitizer Use at Home, at Play, and Out and About
This CDC factsheet will help in knowing when to clean your hands and which method to use that will give the best chance at preventing illness

Pandemic Flu Checklist: K-12 School Administrators
The CDC recommends this resource, which is applicable to COVID-19, for school administrators. Consult with your school nurse regarding what is currently in the school's response plan and what recommendations they propose to include

Teaching Children and Families Regarding COVID-19

This document includes resources for ensuring students and families receive accurate information when explaining what COVID-19 is, how to prevent it and why communities had to close schools and businesses