

Virtual School Counseling




Hi all! Please use this presentation as a snapshot of a role of a K-8 virtual school counselor at k12 schools. I sincerely hope this information will be of help while you try to navigate school counseling in the online world!

Welcome!



Mrs. Whitney Cress
NCVA K-8 School Counselor

- Two years in elementary BAM schools
- Two years in K-8 virtual school counseling
- Foster momma 



Agenda

- K12 schools
- ASCA on virtual school counseling
- A day in the life
- Connecting and engaging with students
- Individual and group counseling
- Reflect: the needs at your school
- Common at-home student behaviors
- Dos and don'ts
- Working from home tips
- Questions?



K12 Schools



K12 has virtual schools nationwide serving K- 12 grade students.

We:

- **are a public charter school**
- **have in-person state testing (students/staff travel in to designated sites)**
- **have special education students (IEPs, 504s, MTSS)**
- **have all teachers and staff that are state certified**

We are just like any other brick and mortar school! We have adapted our teachings to a virtual environment. You will find many similarities in our roles.



A.15. Virtual/Distance School Counseling School counselors:

- a. Adhere to the same ethical guidelines in a virtual/distance setting as school counselors in face-to-face settings.
- b. Recognize and acknowledge the challenges and limitations of virtual/distance school counseling.
- c. Implement procedures for students to follow in both emergency and nonemergency situations when the school counselor is not available.



- d. Recognize and mitigate the limitation of virtual/distance school counseling confidentiality, which may include unintended viewers or recipients.
- e. Inform both the student and parent/guardian of the benefits and limitations of virtual/distance counseling.
- f. Educate students on how to participate in the electronic school counseling relationship to minimize and prevent potential misunderstandings that could occur due to lack of verbal cues and inability to read body language or other visual cues that provide contextual meaning to the school counseling process and school counseling relationship.

ASCA Position Statement



The School Counselor and Virtual School Counseling

(Adopted 2017)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors working in a virtual setting provide a school counseling program through the use of technology and distance (virtual/online/e-learning) counseling with the same standards and adherence to ethics as school counselors working in traditional school settings. School counselors work collaboratively with all stakeholders to ensure equity, access and success of all students whether virtual school counseling is offered synchronously or asynchronously.

The Rationale

Online learning is becoming increasingly relied upon in the United States (Setzer & Lewis, 2005) as students ranging from kindergarten to the postsecondary level are enrolling in virtual schools and online distance-education programs (Holmes & Kozłowski, 2016). Clark (2001) defined a virtual school as "an educational organization that offers K–12 courses through Internet or web-based methods" (p. 1). Students can be involved in online programs, ranging from a part-time, hybrid model in which they take some components of their education in a face-to-face environment and some in a fully digital environment, to fully online programs and degrees (Holmes & Kozłowski, 2016).

- https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/PositionStatements/PS_Virtual.pdf

The School Counselor's Role

Within this new environment, school counselors provide programming to encourage engagement in the virtual school counseling platform to ensure students can gain access to the tools required to reach their potential. Students enroll in virtual schools for myriad reasons and come from diverse backgrounds. These students have unique reasons for choosing to attend a virtual school to remove barriers that keep them from achieving success in school. These unique reasons include but are not limited to:

- Dealing with mental health issues that lead to them needing to be in a smaller environment
- Being medically unable to attend a physical school
- Preferring a smaller environment, smaller class size or being able to be on their own
- Dealing with bullying in a traditional school setting
- Wanting a more rigorous school curriculum
- Wanting more individualized instructional support
- Requiring gifted and/or accelerated courses
- Developing asynchronously, such as being gifted in some courses and behind in others
- Participating in athletics or performing arts at the professional level

virtual charter public schools to serve as state-funded educational environments; learning is rapidly increasing. Within this new environment, school counseling in the virtual school counseling platform to ensure students can gain success. Counselors understand the additional concerns related to the use of distance learning. Every attempt to protect confidentiality and meet any legal and ethical standards (Schneider Corey, Corey & Callanan, 2015, p. 545).

School counselors follow ethical standards in their virtual school counseling program. Hale (2014) found that the experiences of school counselors can vary based on the needs of those who service as virtual school counselors.

School counselors provide programming to encourage engagement in the virtual school counseling platform to ensure students can gain access to the tools required to reach their potential. Students enroll in virtual schools for myriad reasons and come from diverse backgrounds. These students have unique reasons for choosing to attend a virtual school to remove barriers that keep them from achieving success in school. These unique reasons include but are not limited to:

A DAY IN THE LIFE



- Check emails/calendar for the day
- Prep/upload my small group, individual or assembly ppts for the day
- Teach small groups, individual sessions, or assemblies
- FU with any new family referrals
- FU with families and students that need FU
- Planning (look at student data, create small group/individual counseling ppts, ect)
- Attend staff or committee meetings

Connecting and Engaging Students Online

I offer small groups, guidance lessons, academic sessions and individual counseling sessions.

Although I do not physically see our students, we virtually maintain close relationships and communication with all students and families.

Tips for connecting and engaging your students and families virtually:

- Use webcams for lessons and sessions (get animated!)
- Cold call families you already work closely with or know may be struggling (Elem students esp. LOVE getting called)
- Communicate clear expectations of what is required (many students will not engage when classes/lessons are “optional”)
- Document preferred ways of communication for families so you can get ahold of them quickly when needed (call, email or [text](#))
- Encourage families to set a daily routine and at-home work space for doing schoolwork
- Encourage families to stay active! Go for a walk, get fresh air, work on schoolwork outside.

Individual Counseling

- Be comfortable in your platform
- Use webcams! Have a non-distracting background
- My goal
 - set a required session meeting time with a FU the same time week after
- Common concerns
 - Confidentiality



Small Group Counseling

- Meets weekly for 30 minutes for 5-6 weeks
- Google survey sign-ups

Support Groups

- Meets 1x a month throughout the school year for 45 minutes
- Google survey sign-ups
- What are you student's specific needs that could benefit from peer support?

Guidance Lessons/Assemblies

- Meets 1x a month throughout the school year for 30 minutes
- Topics set for the year, and put on every student's schedule



SEL group support



- **Elementary**

- Coping Skills
- Swimming in a Sea of Friends
- Worry Warriors
- Memory Keepers (Grief)

- **Middle School**

- Self-confidence
- Survivors of bullying
- Cool Kids (Executive Functioning)
- Memory Keepers (Grief)
- Light Keepers (Anxiety/Depression)
- Unwind Social Time (Social Skills)

- **High School**

- Self-confidence
- Light Keepers (Anxiety/Depression)
- Memory Keepers (Grief)
- Unwind Social Time (Social Skills)

- **Parents**

- Parent educational podcasts
- Children with mental health support group



Guidance Lessons/ Assemblies Topics

● Elementary

- September: Self-confidence/Advocacy
- October: Bullying
- November: Thankfulness
- December: Feelings and Emotions
- January: Coping Skills
- February: Self Esteem (loving yourself and equity)
- March: Problem Solving
- April: Friendship
- May: Text Anxiety/Summer Safety

● Middle and High School

- September: Advocating/Initiative/Responsibility
- October: Bullying
- November: Problem Solving
- December: Managing your Emotions
- January: Motivation
- February: Self Esteem
- March: Healthy Relationships
- April: Optimism/Humor

● Parents

- October: Motivating your Child
- November: Raising a Resilient Child
- December: The Power Behind Positivity: Positive Reinforcement
- January: Is it Time to Ask for Help?
- February: Apps your Child is Using and What to Know About Them
- March: Behavior is Communication
- April: Safety for a Child in Today's World



ADDRESSING YOUR NEEDS: IDENTIFY

Addressing at-home student behaviors:

Common behaviors

- School refusal
- Focus
- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression





DOs

- Treat your lessons just as you would in the classroom
- Still use your creativity!
- Be personal, present, make those connections, and make contact



DON'Ts

- Overload yourself with individual sessions
- Become robotic
- Fade away (your kids need you!)



A few other tips...

Student Referrals- email, phone or google survey

Community Resources- prep resource handouts with updated info

Individual Counseling- <https://zoom.us/join?zid=3172> or <https://hangouts.google.com/> or phone

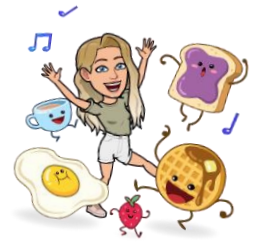
Group Counseling/Guidance Lessons- <https://hangouts.google.com/> OR <https://zoom.us/join?zid=3172>

Scheduling Students & Planning- <https://calendly.com/>

ASCA Webinars:

- School Counseling in an Online World: <https://videos.schoolcounselor.org/school-counseling-in-an-online-world>
- Ethical Considerations: School Counseling in a Virtual Setting (Part 1): <https://videos.schoolcounselor.org/ethics-virtual-school-counseling>
- Ethical Considerations: School Counseling in a Virtual Setting (Part 2): <https://videos.schoolcounselor.org/ethical-considerations-school-counseling-in-a-virtual-setting-part-2>

Tips for YOURSELF: work at home self-care



- Take any extra time to plan ahead

- You may find extra time in your day that was previously filled with putting out fires, resolving student conflicts, student session drop-ins, lunch duty, ect. Take advantage of that extra time!

- Stay active

- Move, take walks, add an at-home workout, get fresh air, hydrate!

- Schedule a REAL lunch break

- You can shut down your computer, enjoy a good lunch, and take the time to enjoy it!

- Set boundaries for home and work

- Because you now work from home, it can be hard to separate the two. Remember to end your day at your appropriate time and keep your computer closed.
- If your managing your own kids at home while working, set clear expectations.

- Treat Yo' Self

- What can you use that previous commute time towards? A workout, extra rest, reading, a healthier morning routine? Take advantage of that extra time you have now been gifted. Try not to fill it with extra work!



Contact info

Mrs. Whitney Cress
NCVA K-8 School Counselor

Email: whcress@ncvacademy.org

TPT store: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/Counselor-Cress>

Resources mentioned in webinar

- List of family resources by topic:
<https://ncvastudentservices.wixsite.com/ncva/resources>
- The Magic School Counselor Book
 - <https://www.amazon.com/Magic-Counselor-Purchasable-Unforgettable-Guidance/dp/1889636657#ace-g5421475708>

