



Guidelines for School Reopening from the Connecticut School Counselor Association

June 2020

School counselors play a vital role in our schools. Covid-19 and issues of racial injustices have taken a social and emotional toll not only on adults but on our student population as well. This document is intended to provide school counselors and district/building leaders with guidance on returning to school as it pertains to the school counselor's role, as well as guidance on implementing social and emotional supports in schools.

The School Counselor's Role in Reopening

Reopening Committees - School counselors should be a part of reopening/reentry committees to provide input on best practices in regards to school counseling programs and social emotional health.

School Counselor Self-Care/Advocacy - This can be an especially stressful and emotional time for school counselors as they work to address others social emotional health. It is important that administration allow school counselors the time to assess their own needs and practice self-care. It is also important for school counselors to advocate for themselves with staff and administration in regards to their normal everyday school counseling duties, what duties may have arisen or increased as a result of distance learning and racial injustices, as well as other additional social emotional duties that may have been added in order to recognize any barriers to practicing self-care. It is important for school counselors to be setting boundaries with their time and workload so burnout does not occur and school counselors can feel fully supported in the work they are doing.

Appropriate vs. Inappropriate Activities - School counselors should be adhering to the appropriate activities for school counselors, and advocating to eliminate inappropriate activities from their workloads. Standardized testing coordination should not be a part of the school counselors school day as it takes away from meeting the direct and indirect counseling needs of students. With SAT and ACT tests halted during the spring, it may become necessary for school administration to step in to coordinate these tests. Appropriate vs. Inappropriate activities of a school counselor can be found [here](#).

Social Emotional Supports

Staff Considerations - It is important to recognize that staff are coming back to school with varying degrees of well-being. Districts should put in place systems to help staff process their experiences since March 2020. Districts can then determine a plan to best meet the needs of all staff members, prior to school starting. Regular check-ins with staff should also occur throughout the year.





Trauma-Informed/Social Emotional and Cultural Competency Training for Staff - Illness/loss during pandemic, distance learning, as well as racial injustices have created trauma for many individuals. It will be vitally important that staff has training in this area, preferably before school starts. Trauma informed training should be delivered by someone who specializes in trauma informed practices. Also, as a part of understanding social and emotional health, all staff should additionally be receiving cultural competency and racial equity training.

Student Social Emotional Screeners - It is recommended that a social emotional screener be administered to all students either prior to or at the beginning of the school year in order to gauge what social emotional concerns there are for students in the district. This will help student support staff like school counselors, school psychologists and social workers plan for needed supports.

Multi-tiered Systems of Support - Once a social emotional screener is given and student needs are identified, school counselors should work with other school support staff to create a MTSS plan in order to address the Tier I, Tier II and Tier III needs of students. More information on MTSS can be found at <https://www.schoolcounselors4mtss.com/>

Student Support Staff - current student support staff (school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers) should be maintained with appropriate student to staff ratios and staff increased where needed so the academic, career and social emotional needs can be met for all students.

Additional Resources:

- [**Trauma-Informed SEL Toolkit**](#) from Transforming Education
- [**Trauma Resource Center Websites**](#) from National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare
- [**Trauma Sensitive Schools Online Professional Development**](#) from Wisconsin Department of Education
- [**“An Initial Guide to Leveraging the Power of Social and Emotional Learning as You Prepare to Reopen and Renew Your School Community”**](#) from CASEL
- [**“School Reentry Considerations: Supporting Student Social and Emotional Learning and Mental and Behavioral Health Amidst Covid-19”**](#) from the American School Counselor Association & the National Association of School Psychologists
- [**“Cops and No Counselors: How the Lack of School Mental Health Staff is Harming Students”**](#) from the American Civil Liberties Union

