

Re-Opening Planning Guidance for School Counseling Programs

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RIDE Rhode Island
Department
of Education

Introduction

This resource was created utilizing the following resources:

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/Publications/SchoolReentry.pdf>

<http://marylandpublicschools.org/newsroom/Documents/MSDERecoveryPlan.pdf>

Resources for Schools:

[A Trauma Informed Approach to Teaching Through Coronavirus](#)

Stage 1: Do First Items

Ensure that School Mental Health Personal are members of the Reopening School Committee. Ensure that School Counselors, Social Workers and Psychologists are all represented on the Wellness & Safety working subcommittee.

The Wellness committee should engage in resource mapping to identify available mental health resources (ex- existing programs, curricula, supports) and needs. The team should look at existing school-based teams. Common goals and efforts should be mapped out to avoid duplication. [Resource Mapping tool](#)

Stage 2: Do Before Schools Reopen

- COVID-19 can cause stressors for many staff and students. It is important to have a Trauma lens when planning re-opening and thinking about supporting students and staff. Some of the stressors include anxiety about getting exposed to COVID and the illness, limited support systems, having had limited connections to others, family stressors, financial stress, personal loss and grief, the uncertainty of the situation. It is important to create a safe space for all.
- Consider creating plans that let staff and students know they can discuss how they are feeling and that they have a place to go that is safe. Plan whole school or class lessons or discussions, embed activities within the classroom and staff meetings to allow for a time to share, reflect and breathe (for example, breathing exercises, journaling, restorative circles)
- Develop scripts for teachers and other staff to use to ensure consistent communication from a trusted adult. Explain to students, staff, families cleaning protocols etc.
- Develop strategies and supports for students, families and staff members. (Lessons, groups, individual supports, newsletter, outreach plans, Virtual Meetings etc.)

- Develop a system for referrals for students who need targeted support. Consider referral system to school-employed support professionals (school counselor, school social worker, and school psychologist) and community mental health supports.
- Develop a plan to “Check-In” with students. Many schools use google forms to check in with students. Develop your “check-in” documents and timeline to send to students.
- Develop a process to identify and provide support to students and/or staff that are at higher risk for significant stress or trauma from COVID-19. (Anyone who has experienced a death of someone close to them, had a disruption of their lifestyle due to food insecurity or financial insecurity, has a history of trauma or pre-existing mental health issues.)
- Consider the impact of masks on the ability to read facial expressions and emotions. Consider impacts on students specifically who are Multi language learners and students who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Create professional development for staff on typical reactions to stress and trauma. Discuss re-entry concerns, trauma, grief, stress etc.

Stage 3: Do Once School Reopens

For this stage, consider how you will work through each piece if students are “**Full in-person for All**”, “**hybrid model - Staggered in-person learning with Distance Learning**”, and “**Full Distance Learning for all**”. It is important to plan for each scenario and how you can address each area based on the model implemented.

- Implement Check-in Process with students. Follow up with students based on their needs. Determine effective interventions required.
- Plan for lessons that teach skills in validation, acknowledging that each individual has experienced COVID-19 in their own way. Some might be exhausted, had fun, grieving, scared etc.
- Plan for lessons to allow for students to collectively process the experience. In the first few weeks of school this might need to occur a couple of times, if closures re-occur, this process should be repeated.
- Anticipate reactions and stressors that could occur due to minimized social interactions and the restrictions of social distancing. Offer opportunities for students to distress in a safe way.
- Implement social and emotional learning curriculum in groups and classrooms to allow for continued discussion and outlets for how students are feeling.

School Counselors

<p>Pre-Planning for before school begins</p>	<p>Communication</p>	<p>Assist in the development of a re-entry protocol and assist with communicating it to students and families</p>
		<p>Create a newsletter/Website for resources for families and students (ex. How to help their students deal with stress, anxiety and fears, share supports available)</p>
		<p>Develop Communication Strategies for parents, students, and staff to share information and resources.</p>
	<p>Transition supports</p>	<p>Celebrate students who are transitioning to high school/middle school – Have a welcome sign when they enter the building with their names- share a social media post welcoming the new students.</p>
		<p>Have a virtual welcome meeting. Give a virtual tour. Have older students involved to talk about their experiences and give advice and welcome students.</p>
		<p>Have transition meetings between Elementary/Middle and Middle/High School.</p>

Mental Health Support	Classroom lessons, Individual counseling, group counseling, referrals	Review supports, curriculum, schedule and develop targeted tier 1 lessons to support students. Some lesson ideas: Dealing with stress, anxiety, mindfulness, problem solving, social emotional learning strategies to help students adjust to the changes in their environment etc.
		Plan how teachers will refer students for tier 2 supports and create check in documents to be able to target students who need additional supports. Create plan for getting out check in documents through teachers in the first week of school.
		Create Referral list for outside student referrals.
		Plan professional development for staff on issues related to the possible return of the virus, stress management and trauma.
Academic and School Success	Scheduling, Grades, new entrants, and transfers	Plan for how scheduling will look and work based on current situation. Adjust class sizes in the Student Information system (SIS) to reflect guidelines. Plan a system for schedule class change requests based on virtual vs in school.
		Develop plan for new entrants and transfers. Who will get notifications? How will they get them? What will process look like to get the students acclimated to school based on phase in.

Career and College		Plan for how Internships might look based on CDC guidelines
		Plan for student requests for recommendations for College/Schools via virtual platform if needed.
Implementing – Once School Re-opens		
Mental Health Support	Classroom lessons, Group Counseling, Individual Counseling, referrals, consultation	Implement Check-in system (Daily, Weekly) Follow up with students in need of support.
		Implement Classroom Lessons for all students to support Social Emotional Learning (Anxiety, fears, loss, dealing with stress, Mindfulness, Problem solving, gratitude)
		Create and share lessons on how to keep at a safe distance, how we can be creative with our greetings, virtual high fives, air high fives etc.
		Set up referral system with classroom teachers, Meet with teachers to discuss students. (CPT/Student Support Meetings etc)
		Create and provide safe, social distancing small groups and Individual sessions based on need
		Refer Students to outside counseling as needed
		Plan with administration for sudden change in phase (ex. Full in person to hybrid, or distance learning) - How to reach all students, assess technology needs, ensure students have technology, communication strategies with families, students and staff.

	Developmental classroom support	Provide lessons on school expectations to assist students with the adjustment back to a full school schedule (or to a hybrid schedule)
		Consult with teachers to support them and students regarding concerns about behavior, mental health etc.
Academic and school success	Scheduling Grades, new entrants and transfers	Work on a system for new entrants and students transferring to be in place for each phase. Have access to record request forms to facilitate transfer and enrollment.
		Implement system and communicate to students and families for schedule changes etc.
College and Career		Coordinate "visits" for High School Juniors and Seniors from Colleges. Offer webinars/forums on application process and virtual tours in current environment.
Consultation/Coordination	Parent and Community Outreach	Have welcome signs and messages for families.
		Create newsletters and messages to address parents fears and how to manage and deal with those fears. Share information on how to talk with students about their fears and the changes that have been happening.
		Provide Parent forums to share information about day to day operations and offer time to answer questions.