

**VIRTUAL
COUNSELLING –
ETHICAL &
PRACTICAL
CONSIDERATIONS
& PROTOCOLS
EXPLAINED BY
ASCA**

Carolyn Stone and
Wendy Rock

Presenters:



Carolyn Stone, Ed. D.,
Professor of Counselor Education
University of North Florida
ASCA Ethics Committee Chair



Wendy Rock, Ph.D., LPC-S, NCC, NCSC
Assistant Professor of Counseling
Southeastern Louisiana University
ASCA Ethics Committee Co-Chair

Learning Outcomes

After viewing this presentation you should be able to:

- Identify legal and ethical complications surrounding virtual school counselling.
- Describe ethical best practices and considerations when working in a virtual setting.

[ASCA Resource Page: School Counseling During COVID-19](#)

[Resource page from the CDC:
Talking with children about Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

[Infographic COVID-19:
Tips for Young People from PAHO](#)

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 & Kozlowski, 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 & Kozlowski, 2016).

Many states have approved virtual academies or virtual charter public schools to serve as state-funded educational environments; data have shown that enrollment in online or virtual learning is rapidly increasing. Within this new environment, school counselors provide programming to promote engagement in the virtual school counseling platform to ensure students can gain access to the tools required to reach their potential. “Counselors understand the additional concerns related to the use of distance counseling, technology and social media and make every attempt to protect confidentiality and meet any legal and ethical requirements for the use of such resources” (Corey, Schneider Corey, Corey & Callanan, 2015, p. 545).

School counselors should ensure they continue to follow ethical standards in their virtual school counseling program (Wilczenski & Coomey, 2006). Osborn, Peterson and Hale (2014) found that the experiences of school counselors can provide new frames of reference to unique experiences of those who service as virtual school counselors.

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

School counselors working with students in a virtual setting should:

- Adhere to the same ethical guidelines in a virtual setting as school counselors in a face-to-face setting
- Recognize and acknowledge the challenges and limitations of virtual school counseling
- Implement procedures for students to follow in both emergency and nonemergency situations when the school counselor is not available
- Recognize and mitigate the limitation of virtual school counselor confidentiality, which may include unintended viewers or recipients



TAKE
A DEEP
BREATH

Ethics are Aspirational

“Ethics is knowing the difference between what you have a right to do and what is right to do.”

Potter Stewart
Associate Justice of the
United States Supreme Court



Ideal vs. Real



ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors

(Adopted 1984; revised 1992, 1998, 2004 and 2010, 2016)

Preamble

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is a professional organization supporting school counselors, school counseling students/interns, school counseling program directors/supervisors and school counselor educators. School counselors have unique qualifications and skills to address preK-12 students' academic, career and social/emotional development needs. These standards are the ethical responsibility of all school counseling professionals.

School counselors are advocates, leaders, collaborators and consultants who create systemic change by providing equitable educational access and success by connecting their school counseling programs to the district's mission and improvement plans. School counselors demonstrate their belief that all students have the ability to learn by advocating for an education system that provides optimal learning environments for all students.

All students have the right to:

- Be respected, be treated with dignity and have access to a comprehensive school counseling program that advocates for and affirms all students from diverse populations including but not limited to: ethnic/racial identity, nationality, age, social class, economic status, abilities/disabilities, language, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity/expression, family type, religious/spiritual identity, emancipated minors, wards of the state, homeless youth and incarcerated youth. School counselors as social-justice advocates support students from all backgrounds and circumstances and consult when their competence level requires additional support.
- Receive the information and support needed to move toward self-determination, self-development and affirmation within one's group identities. Special care is given to improve overall educational outcomes for students who have been historically underserved in educational services.
- Receive critical, timely information on college, career and postsecondary options and understand the full magnitude and meaning of how college and career readiness can have an impact on their educational choices and future opportunities.
- Privacy that should be honored to the greatest extent possible, while balancing other competing interests (e.g., best interests of students, safety of others, parental rights) and adhering to laws, policies and ethical standards pertaining to confidentiality and disclosure in the school setting.
- A safe school environment promoting autonomy and justice and free from abuse, bullying, harassment and other forms of violence.

PURPOSE

In this document, ASCA specifies the obligation to the principles of ethical behavior necessary to maintain the high standards of integrity, leadership and professionalism. The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors were developed in consultation with state school counseling associations, school counselor educators, school counseling state and district leaders and school counselors across the nation to clarify the norms, values and beliefs of the profession.

The purpose of this document is to:

- Serve as a guide for the ethical practices of all school counselors, supervisors/directors of school counseling programs and school counselor educators regardless of level, area, population served or membership in this professional association.
- Provide support and direction for self-assessment, peer consultation and evaluations regarding school counselors' responsibilities to students, parents/guardians, colleagues and professional associates, schools/district employees, communities and the school counseling profession.
- Inform all stakeholders, including students, parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, community members and courts of justice of best ethical practices, values and expected behaviors of the school counseling professional.

A. RESPONSIBILITY TO STUDENTS

A.1. Supporting Student Development

School counselors:

- a. Have a primary obligation to the students, who are to be treated with dignity and respect as unique individuals.
- b. Aim to provide counseling to students in a brief context and support students and families/guardians in obtaining outside services if the student needs long-term clinical counseling.
- c. Do not diagnose but remain acutely aware of how a student's diagnosis can potentially affect the student's academic success.
- d. Acknowledge the vital role of parents/guardians and families.
- e. Are concerned with students' academic, career and social/emotional needs and encourage each student's maximum development.
- f. Respect students' and families' values, beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identification/expression and cultural background and exercise great care to avoid imposing personal beliefs or values rooted in one's religion, culture or ethnicity.

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.

- **Work with your administrator and Ministry of Education or education department**

- **Be Informed**

- **Stay in communication with school personnel as needed**

- **Advocate when necessary and appropriate**

PLATFORMS



Read the privacy policies for the platforms that your school or Ministry of Education uses.

Know limitations of the platform.

Advocate for a change if the platform is thought to be detrimental.

Don't select or use a platform without Ministry of Education or department of education approval.

Skype for Business / Microsoft Teams

Updox

VSee

Zoom

Doxy.me

Google G Suite Hangouts Meet

My school wants us to be

**BUSINESS
AS USUAL**

Considerations:

Set Hours

Clear Boundaries

Personal Device

Emergency Resources

Zoom meeting,
audio only

Zoom meeting
with video





Do we need a signed release from parents first?

I know there are online schools with online school counsellors that do this every day, but how do we as brick and mortar counsellors incorporate it into our practice?

Work with administrator and Ministry of Education or department of education to inform students, parents and families about the process.

Considerations:

Student privacy
Family involvement as needed/appropriate
Check ins



Considerations

- Headphones with a microphone

- Noise machine

- Identify a separate or private room.

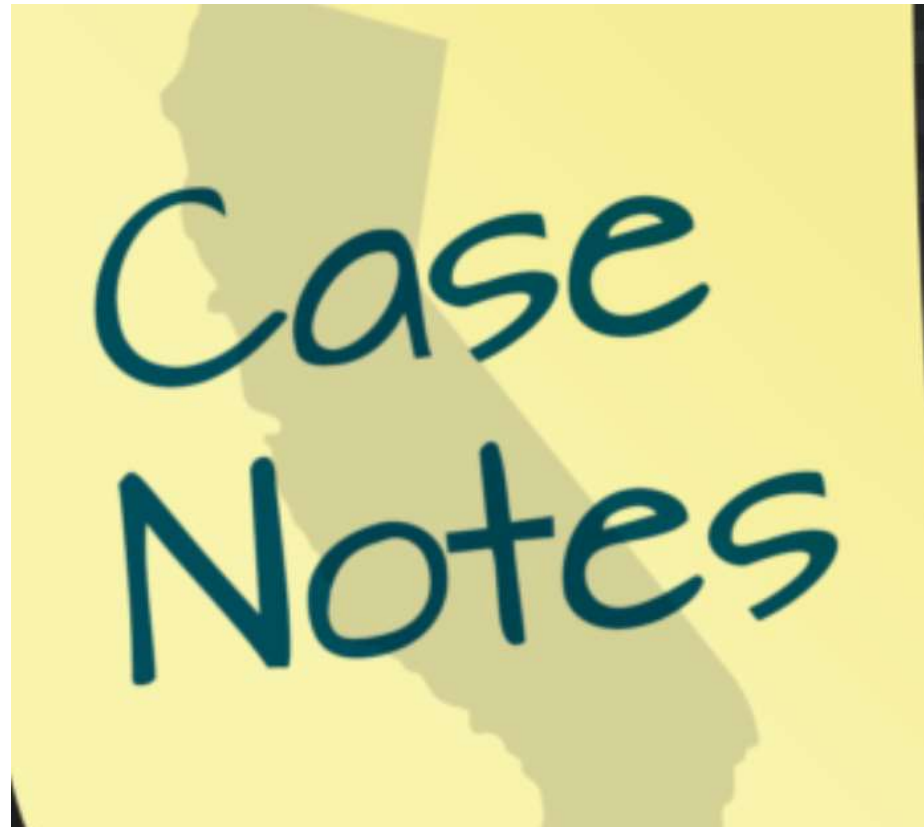
You may think you are starting with an academic topic, but the discussion can go into other places.

A blurred, grayscale background image showing a group of people in a meeting or workshop setting. They appear to be looking at documents or screens. Two horizontal teal lines are positioned above and below the text.

SMALL GROUPS



Can school counsellors take home educational records if asked to do so by an administrator?





CRISIS CALL CENTER



The biggest concern is the safety of a student in crisis that we cannot locate or help immediately.



Follow your school and Ministry of Education policies for online services/activities, accessing student information and using online platforms

Have procedures for students to follow in both emergency and nonemergency situations when the school counsellor is not available

Educate students on ways to participate in the relationship through virtual/distance school counselling

Provide as much information on the school counselling website as possible. Update it frequently.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Ethical Standards for School Counselors

“school counselors have an ethical imperative to maintain a professional distance from students and parents. Professional distance is the appropriate familiarity and closeness a school counselor engages in with students and their family members. When professional distance is violated, then dual relationships occur (ASCA, 2016a, A.5)”.



ONE VISION
ONE VOICE
ASCA @ home
JUNE 29 - JULY 2



YOU GOTTA
NOURISH
TO FLOURISH



Wendy Rock
wendy.rock@selu.edu

Carolyn Stone
cstone@unf.edu