# Comprehensive School Counseling Programs During School Closure

*The role of school counselors remains vital while schools are instructing from a distance. Schools should continue to deliver the components of a comprehensive school counseling program described in* ***Texas Education Code 33.005****:*

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| **Program Component** | **Key Considerations** | **Guiding Questions for Local Planning** |
| A **guidance curriculum** to help students develop their full educational potential, including the students’ interests and career objectives; | Guidance instruction may be delivered live in a virtual classroom. Alternatively, consider disseminating pre-recorded lessons or curated online material. Use guidance lessons and assignments as an opportunity to check in and identify students in need of responsive services. | * What digital tools and platforms are classroom teachers using to implement instruction? Do counselors have access to these tools? * What content areas might be able to provide time for live instruction of guidance lessons? * How can counselors adapt delivery of guidance lessons to a virtual format? * What guidance lessons and assignments provide insight into student well-being? * What guidance lessons and assignments support students’ ability to engage virtually in individual academic and postsecondary planning? |
| A **responsive services** component to intervene on behalf of any student whose immediate personal concerns or problems put the student’s continued educational, career, personal, or social development at risk; | A multi-tiered system of supports is a valuable framework in this context. Consider how you can identify highest-need students and prioritize consistent outreach to them and their families. | * Which students are most at-risk academically? Emotionally? * How will counselors document student interventions and progress? * How will counselors identify students presenting with new risks while in a virtual school context? * What digital tools and resources are teachers using to monitor student performance? Do counselors have access to these tools? * How can counselors maintain student privacy with online individual counseling? * What are district requirements and the process for obtaining consent for counseling sessions from a parent/guardian? * How do counselors plan to secure session documentation at home? * What is the process for making and tracking referrals virtually? * What is the process for teachers to refer students they are concerned about? * Who are key community partners in providing referred services? What is their current virtual capacity? Are necessary permissions and data sharing agreements in place to make referrals and share information? * How can counselors safely offer group services to Tier II students virtually? * Do counselors have resources to which students can be quickly referred if they are found to be in crisis or have escalated immediate needs? |
| An **individual planning** system to guide a student as the student plans, monitors, and manages the students own educational, career, personal, and social development; | Maintaining a robust postsecondary advising program is important for **all** middle and high school students, to inspire continued academic engagement in a challenging time. Focused advising to current 11th and 12th grade students is essential to their success. | * What are the key college and career readiness milestones for each grade level? * How can those milestones be supported in a virtual context? * What digital resources do you provide students and families to support their individual planning? Are all students and families aware of the resources? * What communication channels and supports are available to 11th and 12th grade students navigating individual challenges with their transition planning? Are all students aware of these channels and supports? * Do you have up-to-date information from post-secondary resources regarding modified timeframes and expectations? |
| **System support** to support the efforts of teachers, staff, parents, and other members of the community in promoting the educational, career, personal, and social development of students. | Consistent, intentional communication with all key stakeholders is of utmost importance in a virtual context. | * What is the involvement of school counselors in campus and district leadership planning during the school closure? * How are school counselors kept informed of key decisions and resources? * How will campus/district leadership monitor counseling activities during closure? * What communication channels do counselors have with each stakeholder group (teachers, staff, students, families, community partners)? What is the frequency and substance of communication? * How will school counselors provide support and professional development opportunities to other educators in the campus and district during closure? |

*Additional Considerations for Communication*

1. **Ensure your school counseling website is up-to-date and reflects the current operations of the program. Include:**
   * Services available to students and how to access them
   * Digital resources for individual planning and social-emotional well-being
   * Clear, current contact information for counseling staff and hours of operation/expected wait time for response
   * Links to approved mental health and support resources in the community
   * Directions for what a student in crisis should do (e.g., contact 911, suicide prevention hotline, etc.)
2. **Communicate early and often**
   * Students and families may not realize that the counseling program is operating or what services are available. Consider sending weekly updates highlighting your services and resources and reminding families of upcoming milestones.
3. **Carefully review digital resources for quality and accuracy before promoting them to students and parents.**
4. **Promote self-care with all students, families, and educators.**