Guidance and counseling programs are provided by the school system with the ultimate aim of improving student performance by implementing strategies and activities that support and maximize student learning; helping students to grow in their personal and social development; and providing a foundation for acquiring the skills that enable students to make a successful transition from school into their post-secondary endeavors. The principal of each school, with input from the school counselor, shall develop a counseling program that meets the objectives of the State Board of Education’s comprehensive school counseling program curriculum and the needs of the student population at that school.

School counselors and other guiding adults in middle and high schools shall provide guidance and information to students about high school course selections and requirements prior to ninth grade, in order to inform them about the requirements for college entry, including accelerated preparation for college entry. School counselors shall encourage ninth grade students to complete these requirements in less than four years if feasible and appropriate. In addition, school personnel shall annually provide all students in Grades 9 through 12 with information on the manner in which a parent may lawfully abandon a newborn baby with a responsible person, in accordance with G.S. 7B-500.

The counseling program is the shared responsibility of teachers, counselors, parents, and community members, and should operate with the collaboration of all individuals involved in educating students, including those who assist children with special needs or students who are at risk of dropping out of school or not meeting performance expectations.

Students may seek counseling or be referred by staff or parents. Any staff member who is aware that a student is contemplating suicide or is otherwise suffering from an emotional or psychological crisis must immediately notify the school counselor in accordance with any rules established by the Superintendent or principal. Any counselor or other staff member who knows or has cause to suspect child abuse, neglect, dependency, or death as a result of maltreatment must report the information as provided in policy and as required by law.

Information obtained in a session with a school counselor may be privileged and protected from disclosure as provided by law. A counselor cannot be required to testify concerning privileged information unless, as provided by G.S. 8-53.4, the student waives the privilege or the court compels testimony as necessary to the proper administration of justice. The school counselor privilege does not, however, exempt the counselor from reporting child abuse as required by G.S. 7B-301. Any notation made by a counselor for his or her own use is a confidential document and is neither a public record nor a part of the student's record. Such confidential documents do not have to be shared with parents or others except as required by law. Any document prepared by a counselor that is shared or intended to be shared with other staff is considered an educational record of the student and is available to the parent or eligible student in accordance with policy.

Legal References: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. 1232g; G.S. 7B-301, -500; 8-53.4; 115C-12, -47, -401; State Board of Education Policies GRAD-006, SCOS-011

Adopted: April 9, 2018