



**REVISED SEPTEMBER 2020**

## **SCHOOL COUNSELOR MISSIONS DURING DISTANT LEARNING:**

### **WHY A REVISION?**

As previously mentioned, we are committed to supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of all students at Rochambeau. Given the current circumstances, we felt that it was necessary to revise our online counseling procedures for the 2020 - 2021 academic year to more closely reflect our in-person procedures and align with other independent schools in the area. These changes will mean that parents are no longer required to fill out a consent form for each individual online student/counselor interaction. This will remove a barrier for students to come speak with the counselor and save time for parents. **Families who do not wish for their child to speak with the counselor have the option to complete and submit the opt-out form included at the end of the School Counseling Handbook.** Any questions or concerns can be addressed directly with the school counselors via email ([ThompsonA@rochambeau.org](mailto:ThompsonA@rochambeau.org), [GrainF@rochambeau.org](mailto:GrainF@rochambeau.org)).

### **DIRECT STUDENT SERVICES (INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING)**

- Individual counseling can be set up in one of two ways :
  1. Via appointment. Appointments can be made by emailing the school counselor ([ThompsonA@rochambeau.org](mailto:ThompsonA@rochambeau.org), [GrainF@rochambeau.org](mailto:GrainF@rochambeau.org))
  2. Via office hours. Office hours are a fixed time every week that each school counselor will have in their schedule, set aside for students to speak with the counselor without an appointment. Students will be met at office hours on a first-come/first-serve basis. *Any changes in office hours will be publicized so that the community is notified and aware of the changes.*
- If there is an emergency and a student needs to speak with the counselor immediately, accommodations will be made so that the counselor can meet with the student as soon as possible
- Parents, and faculty/staff members may refer students to the school counselor if they recognize that there is a need.



- **Parents** : Parents can contact the counselor via phone or email. School counseling services are brief in nature and do not replace the role of an outside professional mental health counselor or therapist
- **Teachers / staff** : If a teacher/staff wishes to refer a student to the school counselor they will make an effort to inform families accordingly when possible or coordinate with the counselor to do so. Communication and referrals by teachers and staff are held in accordance to confidentiality principles of the counseling department (see School Counseling Handbook).
- Students can schedule an appointment with their counselor by contacting the counselor via email
- Attending counseling is voluntary and no students will be forced to attend. If a need for services is identified in a student, and he or she does not wish to benefit from counseling at the school, parents will be notified automatically and appropriate referrals will be recommended.
- Online counseling will take place during a time that is convenient both for the student and the school counselor. If a counseling session takes place during a class session, the teacher will be notified. Counseling sessions will take place during different class times to ensure that students do not miss the same class session frequently
- In order to build trust with the child, the school counselor will keep information confidential with some possible exceptions. In some significant cases, the counselor will have a duty to share information with parents/guardians, the child's teachers, and/or the administration
- In certain instances, the school counselor is required by law to share information with parents/guardians or other adult authorities:
  - Reporting child and/or elder abuse;
  - Expressed threats to oneself or of violence toward an ascertainable victim; and
  - Where the student's mental or emotional state becomes an issue in a legal proceeding
- Due to the online environment, the school counselors cannot guarantee the same level of confidentiality as in-person sessions. In order to ensure the most privacy possible, the counselors will take the following steps :
  - Meetings will take place in private areas away from other household members
  - All participants will use a headset and microphone to further maximize privacy
  - A safe online platform (Zoom) will be used
  - No participants will be allowed to record the individual session



## **PARENTAL SUPPORT**

- Counselors may send email to parents or give a phone call to address a specific issue. Also, parents may email counselors directly if parents have any concerns regarding the wellness of their child.
- Counselors can send individualized activities for the parents to work with their child, discuss some issues with the parent over the phone or video call and provide coaching and resources.
- School counselors can help families and students in finding appropriate referrals and guide them in finding appropriate outside resources. Parents can choose to fill out the [Release of Information](#) document. This document allows families to choose which information they would like to share about the student with the school and to which school staff the family would like to communicate this information to.

## **HOW AND WHEN TO CONTACT US?**

Parents and students may reach out to the school counselors via email ([thompsona@rochambeau.org](mailto:thompsona@rochambeau.org), [grainf@rochambeau.org](mailto:grainf@rochambeau.org)) to discuss their concerns. The school counselors will respond within 48 hours. The school counselors will be available to respond to emails and schedule phone calls between 8:30 AM and 4:30 PM.

## **IN CASE OF EMERGENCY**

In the case of an emergency, the school will follow the online crisis management protocol. When a student presents distress during a distance learning session with the teacher or the counselor, the parents will be contacted immediately. If the parent or emergency contact is unavailable or unable to be reached, 911 or the local crisis center will be contacted to check on the child via a child welfare check.

**Crisis resources and hotlines** will be made readily available via the weekly newsletters and the [school website](#) (FR).

**ATTENTION:** If a parent believes that their child or family are in danger, they should call 911 immediately, or the Montgomery County Crisis Center (240-777-4000). Once the crisis is addressed, please contact the school counselor to discuss how to support the student at school.