

Baldwin County Public Schools Annual Notification Regarding School Counseling and Mental Health Services

School Counseling and Mental Health

The Baldwin County Public School System provides or sponsors the following school counseling/mental health services:

1. **Large group guidance** - includes school counselor or professional visiting the classroom to discuss topics such as bullying, class scheduling, stress management, test anxiety or guest speakers to discuss good choices, substance abuse prevention, etc.
2. **Small group guidance** - includes small group of students with school counselor or professional to discuss topics such as test anxiety, grief, healthy coping skills, etc.
3. **Mentoring** - Peer Helpers, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, school professionals and/or social work interns work with students in school on topics such as friendships, healthy relationships, anger management, and anxiety.
4. **Career Guidance and Coaching** – Career coaches provide students with guidance and coaching related to college and career readiness, goal setting, and planning for future success (Middle and High School Only).
5. **Assessments or Surveys** - includes questionnaires provided to students related to social behaviors, feelings, etc.
6. **Crisis intervention** - short-term, immediate assistance by school counselor or professional for a specific situation.

Review of Materials

You may request to review any materials used in the guidance and counseling programs available to students by contacting the student's principal or the Prevention and Support Supervisor, Sherry Rainbolt @ sarainbolt@bcbe.org or (251) 972-8550.

Information Regarding How to Allow, Limit, or Prevent Your Child's Participation in Mental Health Services

Under Alabama law, no student under the age of sixteen may participate in ongoing school counseling services including, but not limited to, mental health services, unless (1) the student's parent or legal guardian has submitted a written opt-in granting permission for the student to participate or (2) there is an imminent threat to the health of the student or others; (3) due to suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation; or (4) when there is an immediate necessity for immediate grief counseling.

Therefore, if your child is under sixteen, they will only be allowed to participate in mental health services if you opt-in. **If you would like the school system to be able to offer and/or provide mental health services (school counseling) to your child, you must opt-in for each service listed for them to participate in that service.**

In Accordance with Alabama law, even if you do not opt-in to mental health services, your child may be provided mental health services by a counselor due to:

1. An imminent threat to the health of the student or others;
2. Suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation; or
3. When there is an immediate necessity for immediate grief counseling.

School employees may determine in their discretion whether any of the above exceptions exist and provide the mental health services they deem necessary under the circumstances.

Parent of students with disabilities: Please note that the opt-in process is not applicable to any school counseling services or “mental health services” contained in a student’s IEP or §504 plan. Consent for those services will be obtained and information regarding your child’s mental health services will be provided through the usual special education or Section 504 process.

OPT-IN FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

As of the date of my signature below, my child, _____, is under the age of 16 years old:

- Yes
- No

If No, stop here.

If Yes, continue below.

I hereby give my permission for my child to participate in the following mental health services:

[Check the box for each mental health service you want to be available to your child]

- Large group guidance** - includes school counselor or professional visiting the classroom to discuss topics such as bullying, class scheduling, stress management, test anxiety or guest speakers to discuss good choices, substance abuse prevention, etc. based on materials and curriculum developed by Thrive Way and the Peer Helpers Program which may be reviewed as indicated above.
- Small group guidance** - includes small group of students with school counselor or professional to discuss topics such as test anxiety, grief, healthy coping skills, etc.
- Mentoring** - Peer Helpers, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Social Work Interns work with students in school on topics such as friendships, healthy relationships, anger management, and anxiety.
- Career Guidance and Coaching** – Career coaches provide students with guidance and coaching related to college and career readiness, goal setting, and planning for future success (Middle and High School Only).
- Assessments/Surveys** – includes questionnaires provided to students related to social behaviors, feelings, etc.
- Crisis intervention** - short-term, immediate assistance by school counselor or professional for a specific situation.

You may rescind permission for a student to participate in mental health services at any time by providing written notice to school administration (i.e., principal, school counselor, etc.).

Date

Child’s Name (Printed)

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)

Signature Parent/Guardian Signature