

Confidentiality and Informed Consent – “Seeing” the School Counselor Online

What is confidentiality?

Confidentiality is keeping information discussed between the student and the school counselor (or the parent and the school counselor) private.

Confidentiality is vital to the student-counselor relationship. Obviously, we cannot completely ensure confidentiality in an online setting, but we have to attempt to maintain it even when we meet virtually rather than face-to-face.

What are some things parents can do to preserve confidentiality online?

- Allow the student to move the computer to a private space for the duration of the meeting.
- Provide student with headphones with a microphone.
- Turn on white noise to keep others from being able to overhear.

Are there times when the school counselor will break confidentiality?

Yes, there are certain instances when the school counselor is required to report confidential information, such as:

- When a student reports someone is hurting them
- When a student reports they are hurting someone else
- When a student reports they are hurting themselves
- With the student's permission (often something that is uncomfortable for the student but useful for a parent or teacher to know)

What is informed consent?

Informed consent is the permission given to the school counselor to talk to a student with the understanding of the benefits and risks.

How do school counselors get informed consent in an online setting?

When parents complete the Microsoft form requesting Mrs. Day or Mrs. Masters to reach out to their child, they are allowing the counselor to provide online counseling services. When a student joins a virtual meeting, they are opening a line of communication.

Link to request to “see” Mrs. Day (1st, 3rd, and 5th grades): <https://bit.ly/2WLIaWE>

Link to request to “see” Mrs. Masters (KG, 2nd, and 4th grades): <https://bit.ly/3bsXF9Z>

Please note that school counselors do not provide “therapy.” Referrals for outside counseling services are available for children experiencing non-school related issues or problems requiring long-term counseling.