

Bedford Public Schools Student Support Counseling Department Reopening Plan/Update

Trauma informed social/emotional learning and cultural competence is critical to re-engaging students, supporting adults, rebuilding relationships, and academic engagement. Educators continue to collaborate and learn new ways to intentionally cultivate a caring and equitable learning community -- one that employs specific practices, routines, and strategies that actively involve all students in their social, emotional, relational and academic growth.

Multi Tiered Counseling Plan

The overall focus of effort is systemic universal support

Innovate capacity: Expand existing and innovate capacity due to increased volume and complexity of teen service access/support needs. We have been designing supports for acute stress, anxiety, depression, and grief to make them universal for some time. We have also implemented social emotional surveys for students and parents/caregivers to assess need and design support.

Strengthen our seamless service chain: expand providers and community based sectors.

Upstream Prevention: Strengthen current practices and expand new approaches to increase early prevention and pre-crisis intervention across schools.

Using these supports as building blocks, the Counseling Department reopening plan is anchored in flexibility, predictability, and simplicity. It must be flexible, able to function whether students are in school, at home, or some combination of the two. It must be predictable, so that students and families can easily access counseling services. Our model is simple and builds on current practices so it does not add unnecessary complexity during this already complex time.

Connection and Collaboration

Safe, supportive, and reliable relationships promote resiliency and serve as protective factors against adversity. Relationships promote a feeling of safety which supports learning. During the school closure in Spring 2020, school counselors and adjustment counselors continued to meet with students on a regular basis. They collaborated with teachers, administrators, special educators, and families to foster student engagement. During the transition to school this Fall, particular attention will be paid to vulnerable students and those who are new to the district.

- **Multi-tiered Counseling Plan**

Counselors will continue to engage in **social/emotional health check-ins** with students on a regular basis. Screening measures may be used for students who are determined to be at risk.

- **Coordinate Connections with High Needs Students and Families**
Counselors have identified vulnerable students: students at risk, who have been significantly impacted by the pandemic, and/or struggled with remote learning. School counselors are working to ensure these students have academic and social/emotional support.
- **Monitor Student Attendance**
Counselors, along with the School Nurse and Assistant Principals, will closely monitor student attendance and will reach out to students and their families, if they do not return to school, as they may be experiencing school avoidance due to anxiety related to the pandemic.
- **Counseling Department and Academic Intervention Collaboration**
Counselors have an established collaboration with the faculty to oversee academic interventions to support students' academically as well as socially and emotionally.
- **Student Support Team (SST) and Child Protection Team (CPT)**
SST and CPT will continue working collaboratively to ensure that a comprehensive care response is provided to ALL students and families to ensure access to medical care, psychosocial support, and advocacy.

Students' Social-Emotional Competencies

Now more than ever, students need us to attend to both their social/emotional and academic development simultaneously. Students may need support for using and strengthening their coping skills to navigate the multiple stressors inherent to living through a pandemic. Social/emotional classroom curriculum will be supported by the counseling team through:

- **Developmental Counseling Seminars**
Counseling seminars offer opportunities to reinforce academic and social/emotional skills.
- **Small Counseling Groups**
Small counseling groups will be facilitated by adjustment counselors/social workers and their offerings have been expanded.
- **Individual Counseling with School Counselor and/or an Adjustment Counselor**
- **Google Counseling Classrooms**
Students grades 6-12 have access to Google Counseling Classrooms with multiple resources and opportunities for connection and collaboration.
- **Social/Emotional Learning Website**
A new [SEL website](#) for families and faculty with a SEL resource library for faculty will be available.
- **Transition Grades**
Our students and families who are transitioning to a new building (grades 3, 6, and 9) will receive communication from their counselors prior to the start of the school year to begin building relationships between families and the school. Counselors join morning

meetings at Davis and Lane school so students in grades three and six are introduced to the counselors in their new school before the summer. Students and families will have the chance to meet the counseling team at the 9th grade virtual grade level meetings prior to the school year. Counseling lessons and seminars will focus on building community and connection.

Access Counseling Services

Professional counseling services provided by school counselors and school adjustment counselors will continue to be offered. Students' school counselors are available on an as-needed basis for brief solution-focused counseling. Students with ongoing needs can receive support from our school adjustment counselors/social workers. School adjustment counselors offer individual, small group, and family counseling to help students and their families cope with personal and/or social situations that hinder the student's learning process. Students can receive help from a school adjustment counselor by speaking to their school counselor for a referral. Parents, teachers, school counselors, and administrators may also request such services for a student by speaking with the student's school counselor.

[For more information about the comprehensive BHS counseling department services and seminars series see the [Counseling Department Guide 2020-2021](#).]

Care Coordination

Counselors continue to work with outside agencies and providers, and communicate with faculty and staff to support students, with in-person, hybrid, and/or remote options. Bedford Public Schools has established relationships with community mental health professionals. School counselors maintain on-going contact with area agencies and private mental health practitioners serving adolescents and families, and facilitate the student's involvement with these out-of-school services. The Bedford Public Schools Counseling Department works collaboratively with the following community health professionals and agencies; not limited to but including:

- Christopher Bang, Bedford Community Social Worker, (781) 275-7727 ext. 4328
- [Interface Referral Service](#), An outpatient mental health resource and referral Helpline available to residents and BPS school students
- [Eliot Community Human Services](#)
- [Advocates](#)
- [Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition](#) (BRYT), Partnering with schools and families to get students back on track after prolonged absences.

Bedford Public Schools Parent Programming Counseling Department

Evenings with the Counselors

Bedford Public School counselors are hosting a series of programs for parents on developmentally appropriate topics. All parents are welcome to attend. Each program typically involves a short presentation that includes a variety of resources and handouts. We then leave plenty of time for discussion and questions. "Evenings with the Counselors" is designed to not only provide parents with information and resources but we aim to help parents develop a support network. We recognize that many parents have similar questions regarding how to navigate through their child's school years and our program is a great venue to meet other parents who share common experiences. A list of the 2020-2021 programs is detailed below.

COVID Life and School Reopening

When: Thursday, September 3rd, 7:00-8:00pm

Presenter: Mary DeLorenzo, Consulting School Psychologist

Join Bedford Health and Human Services consulting School Psychologist Mary DeLorenzo, MEd, CAGS to discuss how to prepare for the return to school and how to help your child create a new normal with new rhythms. The discussion will center on

- how to prepare for and discuss the plan for return to school with your child
- coping skills and mindfulness
- how to build resiliency during this difficult time
- tools and resources to help children and families

Resilience Required: COVID-19 and Teen Mental Health

When: Tuesday, November 17th, 7:00-8:00pm

Presenter: Jon Mattleman

Facilitator: Charles Alperin, BHS Social Worker

A webinar for parents and caregivers. This Fall couldn't be more different. Grief, loss, the rise of anxiety and depression, and ongoing uncertainty about the future are impacting our children. Join Counselor Jon Mattleman for a dynamic virtual program providing a framework to understand and navigate this school year, your teen/tween's mental health, and how to be a support. In addition, participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and get concrete answers and practical steps they can take now.

Self-Regulation During Covid-19 (Grades K-2)

When: Wednesday, December 2nd, 6:00-7:00pm

Presenters: Davis Counseling and Behavioral Therapy Team

Please join us for tips and resources to support self regulation for your children during the challenge of living and learning during COVID. An opportunity for questions will be held at the end of the presentation. We will provide information regarding:

- An overview of Self Regulation as a necessary skill for both adults and children
- Co-regulation and its impact on our ability to teach, parent and relate to others

- Structure and routines to optimize learning and overall regulation
- Mindfulness and ways to incorporate these skills into a daily routine
- Growth mindset: Ways to enhance social emotional learning and perseverance

Social Emotional Wellness (ELPAC Meeting)

When: Wednesday, January 27th, 7:00-8:00pm

Guest Speakers at ELPAC Meeting: Alicia Linsey, Director, Sam Thyne BHS Counselor, Renee Anderson, JGMS Adjustment Counselor

Supporting Adolescents' Mental Health & Well-Being During Difficult Times

When: Thursday, February 4th, 6:30-7:30pm

Presenters: JGMS Counseling Team

Strategies to Help Your Child Manage Anxiety

When: TBD

Presenter: Erin Murphy, BHS Adjustment Counselor

What We Learned from Lynn Lyons - Please join us to dig a little deeper into Lynn Lyons' understanding of how anxiety affects us and strategies we can use to help our teenagers learn how to manage their anxiety better. Our goal is for you to leave with some ideas about what you can do to help.

Please [click here](#) for the presentation from Fall 2019

Self Advocacy/Independence During Covid-19 (Grades K-2)

When: Wednesday, February 10, 2021; 6:30-7:30pm

Presenters: Davis Counseling and Behavioral Therapy Team

Please join us for tips and resources to support self advocacy and independence for your children during the challenge of living and learning during COVID. We will provide information regarding:

- An overview and importance of Self Advocacy
- Developmental stages
- Strategies to help with self-advocacy
- Empowerment/the art of letting go

An opportunity for questions will be held at the end of the presentation.

**Bedford Public Schools Faculty Support
Counseling Department**

Self and Collective Care

September 2, 2020

Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition (BRYT)

A framework for self-care that integrates both individuals taking care of ourselves and community members taking care of each other, because both are critical. This session will also emphasize that educators need both personal and professional supports, and uses the multi-tiered systems of support framework as a way of capturing different levels and types of needs and supports.

[Collective and Self Care Toolkit](#)

Understanding Trauma and Trauma-Sensitive Schools in the Midst of COVID-19

September 14, 2020

Riverside Trauma Center

2 sessions - Grades Pre-K-5 and Grades 6-12

This training is designed to help people working within school systems understand the impact of trauma in education as well as to plan for and respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on themselves in their roles as educators as well as on their students. Using the guiding principles of safety, predictability, and control to think about how to respond to the universal and yet deeply inequitable impact of COVID-19, the training looks at why a focus on trauma is important. It explores how educators may not know how individual students are impacted, and while many student reactions may be grief or acute stress responses, using the lens of trauma and toxic stress can help all students and staff to feel safer and more supported.

The whole school approach of a trauma-sensitive or safe and supportive school is described, as well as how this differs from and overlaps with trauma treatment. The training includes discussions of what school personnel can do to ensure their practices/policies are more trauma-informed as schools transition into the new school year whether they are continuing with remote learning, returning to the school building, or using a blended learning environment. Particular attention is paid to self- and co-regulation, affect management, and self-care skills both for students and school personnel.

Educator Drop In Sessions/Open Office Hours

BPS Counseling Team & Mental Health Team

We recognize that teaching is challenging any year, but this year has many more challenges than usual. One of our goals is to enhance self/collective care for educators by providing opportunities to increase feelings of wellness, reduce stress, and create connections with fellow educators.

“Peer support is a way for people from diverse backgrounds who share experiences in common to come together to build relationships in which they share their strengths and support each

other's healing and growth." *Note- this is for all staff within a school building, not just teaching staff!*

We know from our own first-year educator mentoring program the benefit of having a supportive colleague to provide emotional support, share information and advice, create social connection, and instill hope and empowerment in a non-judgmental manner.

In an effort to give ourselves an opportunity to do just that, pairs of counselors in all four schools will be providing time and space for staff to connect and share with colleagues. A zoom link will be provided.

Strategies for Your Well-Being
Tuesday, November 17, 2020
Dr. Marc Brackett

Join Dr. Marc Brackett, author of [Permission to Feel](#) and director of the [Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence](#), As the adults in schools, we must take care of our own well-being so that we can both show up as our best selves for our students and preserve our own mental and physical health. Don't miss this interactive, practice-oriented webinar, where Dr. Brackett will share research-based strategies to help educators manage their own emotions and build a culturally responsive approach to supporting students in managing their emotions.

Supporting Families Is Rewarding...And So Challenging During COVID-19
December 16, 2020
Jon Mattleman

On Wednesday, December 16th from 2-3 pm, the Bedford Health and Human Services Department and Bedford Public Schools Counseling Department are sponsoring a support webinar for town and school staff with Jon Mattleman, a mental health counselor and presenter for over 35 years. Jon will present "Supporting Families Is Rewarding...And So Challenging During COVID-19. Understanding our new norms and supporting ourselves during the COVID-19." Recognizing that the challenges that families face during these challenging times are complex, and often exhausting, Jon's work is grounded in delivering tools and techniques that can be implemented in real time. Please set the time aside to join us for this informative presentation for Town of Bedford Staff and Bedford Public Schools Staff with a Q&A period at the end. Please register by navigating to: <https://event.webinarjam.com/register/172/q7m5rswr>

Clinical Supervision (for Adjustment Counselors Pre-K-12)

This year we are providing biweekly small group clinical supervision for all adjustment counselors in the district. Clinical supervision is led by Dr. Ostrowsky, MD, who is a Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist. He is a clinician at MIT and an area high school, a consultant to schools and on the faculty at Harvard. Dr. Ostrowsky is a graduate of Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, completed his internship and residency at Cambridge Health Alliance/Harvard Medical School.

EAP Information

Town of Bedford has an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available 24/7. This is a free confidential counseling service available to all employees. Professional counselors are available to talk with employees and their family members about any issue - work related or personal - that may be making it difficult to be entirely productive or to cope in all areas of life. You can reach the EAP at 800-451-1834.

- The MIIA benefit provides 3 free 60-minute sessions.
- Secure a provider/counselor who takes that client's health insurance, so there's the option of continuing beyond the initial EAP sessions, if desired. And, many insurance plans are accepted.
- Find a provider as geographically convenient as possible for the client, 'virtual' considerations notwithstanding. They're able to filter for many 'specialties', modality to a great extent and certain characteristics as circumstances permit.
- Generally connect clients to affiliates/providers within two business days and quicker under certain clinical conditions, when needed.