

School Counseling at Dolvin Elementary

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I feel so fortunate to be working with Dolvin's students and families this school year! I am committed to providing our students with the best social and emotional tools possible as they navigate this exciting and often challenging stage of life. Please know that my support is available when your student encounters these challenges, and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about my role.

My Credentials

I am a professional school counselor certified by the Georgia Department of Education. I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from Mercer University and a Master of Education degree in school counseling from the University of West Georgia. I am a member of the American Counseling Association, the American School Counseling Association and the Georgia School Counseling Association, and I regularly invest in continuing professional development with the intention of enhancing my services to Dolvin Elementary School's students, parents and staff.

What is School Counseling?

According to the American Counseling Association, "professional counseling is the professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals." As Dolvin's school counselor, I provide a variety of services that support students in their efforts to achieve academic, personal/social and career goals. These services include one-on-one counseling, group counseling, parent consultation, and referral to resources in our local community. I also facilitate classroom lessons and organize other school programs that promote success and wellbeing for all students.

Individual and Group Counseling at Dolvin

Students may seek out or be offered school counseling services for a variety of reasons, which include, but are not limited to, academic, personal, social and career concerns. I use talk therapy, educational activities, expressive art projects and other methods to expand students' ability to reflect on their experiences and to problem solve. I support students with defining what's important to them, setting their own goals and taking independent steps to improve the quality of their lives. I sometimes assign small homework assignments to students that involve practicing new skills or doing reflection activities (e.g. trying out a new social skill or journaling) during their time between counseling sessions.

Individual and group counseling at Dolvin is generally brief and focused specifically on challenges that impede students' wellbeing at school or performance at school. My individual sessions with students usually don't exceed 30 minutes and continue only on a short-term, as-needed basis. If a student would be best served by long-term and/or in-depth counseling, I'm able to assist parent(s)/guardian(s) with finding professional care outside of school that meets these needs (see more in "Referral Services" section). Counseling groups meet weekly, bi-weekly or monthly over the course of a semester, and group sessions do not exceed 45 minutes.

My Availability

My office hours are from 7:10 in the morning to 2:50 in the afternoon on school days. During these hours, I will be consistently available to address situations that need immediate attention and available by appointment to address other concerns or requests. I am available to meet with students, parents, teachers and community representatives in this order of priority:

1. Students with an emergency
2. Students with an appointment
3. Parents/legal guardians with or without an appointment
4. Non-parent community members with an appointment
5. Staff members with student concerns

Students can make an appointment with me by filling out a request form and submitting it in the counselor request box. The forms and the box are located in the hallway next to my office, which is across from the media center. I will contact these students' teachers to determine the most appropriate times for our meetings. I'm available to meet with parents and guardians to discuss issues related to students enrolled at Dolvin, but I do not provide parent/guardian consultations for issues that do not relate to students.

My Approach to Counseling

My approach to counseling reflects the philosophy of Carl Rogers' person-centered therapy, which involves forming genuine, caring relationships with the students, parents and guardians I serve and providing a non-judgmental, affirming space in which problems and solutions can be explored. I also draw from William Glasser's reality therapy in assuming that all human behavior is purposeful and aimed at fulfilling human needs; these needs include belonging, power, freedom, pleasure/enjoyment and survival. Using reality therapy to serve students involves encouraging students to think more carefully about what they are attempting to gain from personal choices and behavior and, when necessary, encouraging students to use alternative, more beneficial behaviors to meet their needs. I often use methods from Albert Ellis' rational emotive behavioral therapy to help students address habitual thoughts, beliefs and behaviors that may be undermining their goals and wellbeing.

In assisting students with goal-setting and overcoming barriers to success, under no circumstances do I impose my personal values, opinions or beliefs on students. I strive to help students clarify their own aspirations and moral principles, and I respect parents/legal guardians' right to be the guiding voice in their children's lives. I recognize and respect the unique strengths and cultures of individual students, and I help students use these strengths to increase their emotional wellbeing and success at school. I value the honest feedback of students and parents regarding ways I can improve my services to best meet students' unique needs.

Student Responsibilities in Counseling

I am not able to, nor do I strive to offer guaranteed or easy solutions to the issues students present. I work together with students and empower them to consider their own beliefs and choices, and I do this in ways that make sense for each student's unique developmental needs. Students are responsible for participating actively in the counseling process, making their own decisions and working toward their own goals. I provide encouragement, perspective, feedback and accountability throughout this process.

Boundaries

I strive to maintain well-defined, professional relationships with Dolvin's students and parents, and, for this reason, I make efforts to minimize relationships with parents and students outside of school (which may arise from becoming a regular customer at parents' businesses, forming friendships with parents, seeing students outside of school, etc.). If a dual relationship exists between myself and a student or their parent, I may connect that student with the school social worker. If a situation arises in which I am the only staff member available with the proper training to serve this student, I will take all steps possible to ensure this student is not harmed as a result of unclear professional boundaries. To further ensure professional boundaries, I also avoid

connecting or interacting with students or parents on social media. See the "A.4. Dual Relationships" section in the American School Counseling Association's "Ethical Standards for School Counselors."

Confidentiality and Privacy

Generally, information a student shares with me in one-on-one meetings will be kept private between myself and that student. However, circumstances exist in which I am ethically and/or legally obligated to share pieces of what students tell me with parents, teachers, administrators, third parties and/or other authorities. These circumstances include when students tell me that

1. Someone is harming or planning to harm the student
2. The student is planning to harm him/herself or someone else
3. An outside party mentioned by the student is in danger

Any time a situation arises in which I must share aspects of students' disclosures with others, I share strictly on a "need to know" basis. This means I only tell those with the ability to help the student exactly what they need to know in order to be helpful, and nothing more. In cases where I feel it would benefit the student, I try to include him/her in the process of sharing key information with those who can serve as key sources of support.

When students participate in group counseling under my supervision, I cannot guarantee that all student group members will keep what is shared in group private. However, I strongly encourage student group members to respect one another's privacy, and I strive to create group counseling environments in which violations of members' trust are highly undesirable.

There are circumstances in which I may present aspects of students' cases to other counseling or education professionals in order to seek additional opinions and/or to determine the best possible courses of action for serving said students. In these cases, students will be discussed anonymously, without my disclosing identifying information.

Potential Risks and Benefits of Counseling

Individual and group counseling often involves students talking about aspects of their lives that are difficult or emotionally challenging. It is possible that students will experience emotional discomfort when speaking about these challenges with me or with their peers. At the same time, talking openly about difficult feelings in a safe setting can lead to increased awareness, self-acceptance and growth. Students are often better able to overcome difficulties and to move forward when they receive therapeutic support. Students, parents and guardians are welcome to discuss with me any concerns regarding the counseling process.

Student Crises Outside of School Hours

If a student has an emergency situation that needs immediate attention at a time outside my office hours (between 7:10AM and 2:50PM on school days), please call 911, go to the nearest hospital emergency room or connect with any of the following resources.

United Way 211: Resource database for all kinds of help.

https://www.gtcuw.org/get_help/

North Fulton Community Charities (NFCC): Help for financial hardship (food, clothing, overdue bills after losing a job, job counseling, applying for Medicaid). Call to make an appointment.

Address: 11270 Elkins Rd., Roswell, Georgia 30076

Tel: 770-640-0399 Fax: 770-640-9220

Email: info@nfcchelp.org

Website: www.nfcchelp.org

The Hub: Local to Johns Creek, this is a safe place for families to get information about resources for mental health, substance abuse and other confidential needs from a resource specialist. There is also a network with service providers and articles.

<http://thehubfrc.org/>

Georgia Crisis & Access Line: Help is available 24/7 for crises involving mental health, drugs or alcohol.

1-800-715-4225

Mygcal.com

Referral Services

If a student would be best served by long-term and/or in-depth counseling, I'm able to refer parent(s)/guardian(s) to a list of counseling professionals in the local community who provide services matching the student's needs.

Feedback and Voicing Concerns

Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any suggestions regarding how I can best serve your student. I am interested in and greatly value your feedback.