



NAIS GUIDELINES OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WORKING IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

PREAMBLE

The NAIS Guidelines of Professional Practice (GPPs) outline standards for professional conduct for various roles or positions within independent schools. We encourage NAIS member schools to view the individual Guidelines of Professional Practice below and share them within their school communities. It is our hope that the increased visibility of and easy access to the guidelines will go a long way in helping schools fulfill their missions.

OVERVIEW

At the heart of the school counseling program is a behavioral health professional (or behavioral health professionals) who is both an educator and an indispensable part of the school community. Like all members of a school community, behavioral health professionals (e.g., school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and other behavioral — or mental — health providers) have committed themselves to promoting the overall health, ethical, and academic well-being of students. Such commitment requires an evolving knowledge of effective school health practices. It also requires compassion and perseverance in the face of a variety of different obstacles. While not exhaustive, this list of guidelines of professional practice is particularly relevant for behavioral health professionals working within independent school communities.

1. The behavioral health professional maintains a professional certification in an accredited field (e.g., social work, psychology, counseling, etc.).
2. The behavioral health professional is trained in and knowledgeable of the social, emotional, and intellectual developmental stages of their student population and collaborates with the school's administration to develop policies that help identify and support students' behavioral, emotional, and social needs.
3. The behavioral health professional is knowledgeable about current state laws and the school's procedures for reporting child abuse and neglect and methods to advocate for students' physical and emotional safety following abuse/neglect reports.
4. The behavioral health professional works toward a school climate that embraces diversity and promotes social-emotional, career, and academic development for all students.
5. The behavioral health professional maintains a high regard for the privacy and confidentiality of information collected or recorded about individuals with whom they work. They explain the limits of confidentiality (as determined by the school and in collaboration with the school's health and wellness needs) in developmentally appropriate terms through multiple methods such as student handbooks, school counselor/counseling department website, school counseling brochures, classroom curriculum, and/or verbal notifications to individual students/parents.
6. The behavioral health professional employs a variety of strategies that aim to enhance the climate of the school community and positively influence both student behavior and the school's broader climate.

7. In collaboration with the school's faculty, administration, families, and any other needed consultants, the behavioral health professional develops school-based programs to support the psychological well-being (emotional, social, etc.) of students within the context of the school community.
8. In collaboration with professionals trained in the educational and psychological assessment of children, and along with the school's faculty, administration, families, and external professionals (when appropriate), the behavioral health professional collaborates in creating student support plans that adequately and appropriately accommodate for a child's documented needs.
9. The behavioral health professional helps others periodically reassess student academic goals in relation to clinical developmental assessments and engages in formal behavioral (or mental) health documentation or progress notes that reflect the support offered to students.
10. The behavioral health professional educates the faculty and administration on components of the school counseling program, roles and responsibilities of school counselors, ways in which faculty and administration can utilize counseling program on behalf of students, and expectations faculty, staff, and families should have of the program.
11. The behavioral health professional remains current in clinical knowledge and practice through individualized professional development and a continuing education plan.
12. The behavioral health professional is aware of federal and local laws and guidelines and consults with legal counsel as necessary and appropriate as part of a collective and collaborative effort to develop policies and practices related to purposeful, professional, and appropriate communication within the school community and outside of the educational institution (e.g., medical emergency, mental health, or behavioral services).
13. The school, in collaboration with the behavioral health professional, informs families that school behavioral health personnel may interact with students in an ongoing manner and in several different areas and situations (e.g., student groups, drop-in, and ongoing supportive counseling around adjustment issues, student education, etc.).
14. The behavioral health professional encourages evaluation of the school counseling program that measures the program's support of and effect on the school's mission; student well-being; family, student, faculty, and administration satisfaction; student retention; and institutional sustainability.
15. The school behavioral health professional coordinates or participates in school initiatives or professional development in which the entire school participates, including bringing in outside experts to educate the student, parent, and faculty communities regarding wellness issues.

The school behavioral health professional may take on responsibilities within the community that reflect the knowledge of a behavioral health expert (e.g., clubs, groups).