



Wellness Together: School-Based Therapy Program Informed Consent for Individual and/or Group Counseling

The Wellness Together School-Based Therapy Program offers a wide range of services to individual students and groups. The program exists to promote social/emotional wellness, academic achievement, and a positive educational experience.

What is counseling? Counseling may include individual or group counseling, curriculum-based interventions, and support to students in a variety of formats. Our Wellness Together counselors are Mental Health Specialists (MHSs) who work with students, school personnel, and families to assist with individual student issues, remove social/emotional barriers to student learning, link students and families with community resources, and support overall student achievement. Individual counseling sessions may be conducted with one or two MHSs.

How are students selected for counseling? Students may be referred to the Mental Health Specialist (MHS) for individual and/or group counseling by their school counselor or designated school staff member. When a referral is received, the MHS may call the parent/guardian to discuss the services that may be provided. The MHS may also set up an initial meeting with the parent/guardian and student.

Who provides the counseling? Counseling is provided by MHSs who are trained in Marriage and Family Therapy, Social Work, Professional Clinical Counseling, and/or School Counseling. MHSs may be graduate students/trainees or Registered Associates earning experience that will prepare them for clinical licensure in the state of California, or licensed individuals. Associates and trainees are required to receive regular supervision from a licensed clinical supervisor. The supervision process may include the discussion or observation of services provided.

What will counseling for my student involve? Counseling through the Wellness Together School-Based Therapy Program typically includes 10 individual sessions or 6-8 small group sessions. Counseling services may be provided on the school campus or through telehealth services, and may take place before, during, or after school.

School-Based Therapy services are not available on days when school is not in session. During sessions, the student and MHS(s) may work together to understand concerns, identify present and future consequences, and develop goals and a plan of action for change. A variety of interventions may be used including, but not limited to: Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), Mindfulness (non-religious), Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), Curriculum Based Intervention (CBI), and Person Centered Therapy (PCT). In order to measure the effectiveness of the intervention(s) provided, general student data (including data collected using a written Pre/Post measure) may be used. The Pre/Post measure data is collected exclusively to monitor program effectiveness and is not used for individual student assessment. The data collected is not designed to be, nor is it considered by Wellness Together to be, sufficient to allow for evidence-based clinical diagnosis or identification of educational need, such as might be included in a screening or assessment to identify potential eligibility for services, supports, accommodations, or modifications under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504). Students, their parents, and/or their educational right holders who suspect that such needs exist should contact their public school of residence or attendance for further information on how to obtain appropriate screening for, or assessment for educational services, supports, modifications or accommodations.

When services are discontinued, referrals to community organizations may be offered.

What are the limits of confidentiality? Counseling includes building a relationship with a counselor that is built on confidentiality and trust. Ethical guidelines emphasize the importance of confidentiality between counselors and students, while at the same time recognizing the rights of parents to information and the limits of confidentiality. As a parent or guardian, you have the option to know how sessions are going and if progress is being made. Once a student turns 18 years old (unless conserved by a court of law), he or she will have the right to limit the sharing of information with certain parties. Counseling records typically do not become a part of the student's cumulative education file. However, general documentation indicating that a student received certain services may be included. The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) states that information will not be released to anyone outside of the school district or other associate organizations, including a county office of education, without your permission. MHSs are mandated reporters and by California law confidentiality may be broken in the case of suspected abuse/endangerment of a child, elder, or dependent adult. Confidentiality may

also be broken if the child is perceived to be a danger to themselves or a danger to others. If an MHS has concerns about a student's safety they may notify appropriate school staff and the parent/guardian to make a plan to support the student's safety. Information may also be shared amongst Wellness Together staff members, if appropriate to the student's services.

Are there limits on disclosure to parents or guardians of counseling information to student ages 12 and above? Yes, under California law minor children aged 12 and over may under certain circumstances consent to counseling services without parent or guardian consent and/or involvement.

What is telehealth and how does this impact counseling? "Telehealth" refers to the mode of delivering mental health services via information and communication technologies to facilitate a student's care while the student and MHS are not at the same physical site. All laws governing an in-person counseling session also apply to telehealth sessions, including confidentiality. Each telehealth session will begin with the MHS obtaining the student's full name and address of the student's location for safety purposes. Video conferencing technology used is compliant with the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (commonly referred to as "HIPAA").

There are risks associated with participating in Telehealth including, but not limited to, the possibility, despite reasonable efforts and safeguards on the part of an MHS, that sessions and transmission of information could be disrupted or distorted by technical failures and/or interrupted or accessed by unauthorized persons, and that the electronic storage of treatment information could be accessed by unauthorized persons. Miscommunication between caregivers/students and MHSs may occur via Telehealth. There could be a risk of being overheard by persons near the student so we advise students and families to choose a location that is private and free from distractions or intrusions. In some instances Telehealth may not be as effective or provide the same results as in-person counseling.

Special note to parents/guardians: Telehealth services require, and are not a substitute for, adult supervision for individuals under the age of 18. Please respect your student's confidentiality while providing adequate adult supervision.

Your child should be located within California to receive services via telehealth.

What are the possible outcomes? Through counseling, your student may be taught strategies to help him or her make more effective and healthier decisions, increase the ability to set and reach goals, build better relationships with others, and be more successful in school. Behaviors do not often develop overnight, nor will they disappear overnight. Counseling can be a challenging process and can sometimes create discomfort before a situation improves. Counseling can be most successful when students, school personnel, and family members work together to support the student.

Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns? Your MHS will provide you with their contact information and will be happy to answer any questions you have. If you have questions or concerns about the services provided by your MHS you can contact Wellness Together's Program Manager or Director of Education Services at ProgramSupport@WellnessTogether.org or by phone at (877) 412-8031.

Notice to Clients: The California Board of Behavioral Sciences receives and responds to complaints regarding services provided within the scope of practice of therapy. You may contact the board online at www.bbs.ca.gov.

Is counseling for my child voluntary? It is your choice to consent to or decline counseling for your child at any time. Services provided by the Wellness Together School-Based Therapy Program may be discontinued at any time. If you wish to discontinue services please send a written request to Wellness Together at ProgramSupport@wellnesstogether.org.

What if I need to cancel an appointment? If an appointment needs to be cancelled, please contact your MHS at least 24 hours before the scheduled meeting. When an appointment is cancelled we may not be able to reschedule that week. The agreed-upon weekly meeting schedule may resume the following week. After two no-shows or four cancellations services may be discontinued.

How much will this cost? Currently, there is no cost to students and families for any of the counseling services your student receives as a part of the Wellness Together School-Based Therapy Program.

When is my MHS available? Your MHS is typically available during school hours on their scheduled work days on days when school is in session. If a student or parent contacts an MHS outside of school hours they may not receive or respond to the message until their

scheduled work day. Wellness Together does not provide after hours care or emergency services. If you or your child have an emergency situation, please contact 911 and seek appropriate emergency care.

Services provided by the Wellness Together School-Based Therapy Program may be discontinued at any time. For more information on the Wellness Together School-Based Therapy Program, please visit www.wellnesstogether.org or contact us at info@wellnesstogether.org or (877) 412-8031.

I have read and understand all information set forth above.

I understand the terms of Wellness Together School-Based Therapy Program services including the limits of service and the process for discontinuation of service.

By signing this document, I affirm that I have the legal right to accept these services for (student first/last name) _____.

Also, by signing below I agree to immediately inform all required parties.

Student Name	Signature	Date
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Parent/Guardian Name	Signature	Date
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Parent/Guardian Name	Signature	Date
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MHS Name	Signature	Date
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