

IOWA FAMILY COUNSELING

UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL-BASED THERAPY



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**SUPPORTING CHILDREN
AND FAMILIES WITH
GENUINE, EMPATHETIC,
AND COLLABORATIVE
MENTAL HEALTHCARE
ACROSS RURAL IOWA**

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WHAT IS SCHOOL-BASED THERAPY?

School-based clinical therapy provides regular therapy treatment with a mental health clinician within a school building. The services provided are the same as a patient would receive in a clinical office setting with the convenience of not having to travel to the office.

Therapy allows individuals to explore their feelings, beliefs, and behaviors, in addition to working through challenging or influential memories, identifying aspects of their lives that they would like to change, better understanding themselves and others, and setting personal goals. Therapists help clients work toward desired changes in themselves. Though some clients see improved symptoms quickly, lasting and meaningful change takes time, patience, and perseverance.

Each individual is unique in their needs as well as their treatment plan. Individualized services are provided to treat the specific mental health needs of the client. Common services rendered are a combination of individual talk therapy, play therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT,) dialectal-behavior therapy (DBT,) and acceptance & commitment therapy (ACT.)

Though schools provide a secure location for confidential sessions, the therapists are not employed or compensated by the school district.

WHAT THE SCHOOL PROVIDES

- A space that allows for confidential therapy sessions
- Referrals to the therapist/mental healthcare provider
- Assistance with scheduling therapy sessions to provide the least disruption to the client's school day
- Pertinent information regarding student behaviors or concerns
- Regular school support services including those related to counseling services, social supports, 504 plans or IEPs

WHAT THE THERAPIST PROVIDES

- Diagnosis and treatment of mental health disorders
- Establishing treatment goals and plans in collaboration with the client/student and their parents
- Working with school personnel to schedule appointments
- Collaboration and communication with parents on progress and ways to support their child
- Provide basic information or diagnosis to support the implementation of 504 or IEP plans



"Every child is a different kind of flower that altogether make this world a beautiful garden"

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can teachers and school personnel support students receiving therapy services?

School personnel can support student clients by providing a safe, discrete place to meet for sessions. They also can provide referrals for care and time for the student to be seen within the school day. Teachers and other school personnel can also support the student by interacting with them in a kind, patient, and understanding manner.

If a student is struggling significantly in the classroom setting, teachers can contact parents, school counselors, school administrators, mentor teachers, instructional coaches, or Area Education Association (AEA) consultants for additional classroom support. Therapists can be included in the correspondence for reference or input, but they are not trained in classroom management strategies.

How long until I see results or behavior changes in the student/client?

All people are unique as are their needs and have different goals. Some people respond very quickly and effectively to their treatment plans while others take time to develop the skills, strategies, and mindset needed to meet their goals.

Is the student/client's information shared with school staff including school counselors, teachers, or administrators?

Due to confidentiality and ethics agreements, therapists are prohibited from sharing information with school personnel unless it has been specifically granted by the parent. School personnel may reach out to therapists to share information on the student's progress or to relay concerns that they may have.

Can the therapist come to the classroom to observe the student behaviors in class?

Unless it is part of the student's specific goals and treatment plan, therapists will generally not observe the student in the classroom setting. Therapists are trained to provide clinical diagnoses and treatment of mental health disorders. Therapists may share some tips for working with particular students from time to time, but improving school behavior is not the primary goal of school-based therapy. However, the treatment of underlying mental health issues may increase student success with academics and behaviors in the school environment.

How frequently will the student/client be seen?

Most commonly, clients/students are seen on a weekly basis for about 45 minutes. This time and frequency can vary based on the needs and goals of the client.

If student/clients are seen at school, how can parents/guardians remain involved in the care of their children?

Parents/guardians remain actively involved in the care of their children through phone calls, emails, and informational handouts or resources. Therapists will provide periodic updates to parents/guardians and parents/guardians can contact the therapist at any time.