

SPECIAL SERVICES

Counseling Services

Rules and Procedures for School Counseling Services

This regulation supersedes Regulation 2501.2.

I. PURPOSE

To implement guidelines relating to school counseling services for Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) in compliance with the current version of School Board Policy 2501.

II. SUMMARY OF CHANGES

- A. Identification name has changed.
- B. Title of regulation has changed.
- C. Guidance has been changed in several locations to counseling.
- D. Attachment A, section 4., adds the clarification that parents opting their students out of academic or career guidance are responsible to ensure that academic and graduation requirements are met.

III. DEFINITION—THE SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM

- A. The school counseling program is sequential and is based on the developmental stages of growth of students in kindergarten through grade 12. It is preventive in its focus, exists to enhance academic achievement of students, and involves parents and guardians, staff members, and the community. The counseling program is part of the comprehensive education provided to all students through activities that focus on teaching positive approaches to school and lifelong learning and the knowledge and skills for life and employment. The counseling program includes the following:
 - 1. Academic guidance, which helps students and their parents or guardians to acquire knowledge of the curriculum choices available to students, to plan a program of studies, to arrange and interpret academic testing, and to seek postsecondary academic opportunities.
 - 2. Career guidance, which helps students acquire information and plan for postsecondary educational and career opportunities.

- B. The school counseling program is also personal and/or social in nature and helps students develop an understanding of themselves and the rights and needs of others; resolve conflict; and define individual goals reflecting their interests and aptitudes. Such counseling may be provided as follows:
1. In groups (e.g., all fifth graders) in which generic issues of social development are addressed.
 2. Through structured individual or small-group multisession counseling that focuses on the specific concerns of the participants (e.g., social skills, grief, or anger management.).

IV. REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

- A. A notice regarding counseling programs (Attachment A) shall be published annually and distributed to parents and guardians at the time of initial enrollment. The notice shall include a form that parents and guardians may use to have their children not participate in (opt out of) academic or career guidance, or personal or social counseling of a generic nature (Attachment B). At any time, parents and guardians may elect in writing to have their children not participate in (opt out of) academic or career guidance, or personal or social counseling. Counseling services may be provided to students pursuant to paragraph C. regardless of whether or not the parent or guardian has chosen the opt-out option.
1. The form shall be maintained in the student's cumulative file. The opt-out choice remains in effect throughout the student's K-12 career in FCPS unless written notice is received from the parent or guardian rescinding this choice.
 2. Directors of student services and counselors will maintain a record of students who have been opted out of academic or career guidance, or personal or social counseling.
- B. Parents or guardians shall receive written notification of student participation in short-term personal or social counseling of an individual or small group nature.
- C. Parental or guardian consent is not required for short-duration personal or social counseling that is needed to maintain order, discipline, or a productive learning environment.
- D. School counselors are prohibited from using counseling techniques that are beyond the scope of their professional certification or training, including hypnosis or other psychotherapeutic techniques that are normally employed in medical or clinical settings and focus on mental illness or psychopathology.
- E. School personnel are prohibited from recommending the use of psychotropic medications for any students. They may recommend that a student be evaluated by

an appropriate medical practitioner. Counselors may consult with a medical practitioner who is serving the student with the written consent of the student's parent or guardian.

- F. Information and records of personal or social counseling shall be kept confidential and separate from a student's educational records and cannot be disclosed to third parties without prior parental or guardian consent or otherwise provided by law.

Legal References: 8VAC20-620-10, School Guidance and Counseling Services
Virginia Department of Education Standards of Quality Regulations
Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia

See also the current versions of: Policy 2501, School Counseling Services
Regulation 2701, Student Personal Data

**Attachment A
Regulation 2501.3**

School Counseling Notice to Parents and Guardians

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1. School counseling programs are provided in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) in compliance with the regulations of the Virginia Board of Education and Fairfax County School Board policy.
 2. The counseling program is part of the comprehensive education provided to all students through activities that focus on teaching positive approaches to school and lifelong learning and the knowledge and skills for life and employment. It includes:
 - Academic guidance, which helps students and their parents or guardians to acquire knowledge of the curriculum choices and testing and choose appropriate courses leading to graduation and a transition to college, career, and other educational opportunities.
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 - Career guidance, which helps students to acquire information and skills in order to plan for work, jobs, apprenticeships, and postsecondary educational and career opportunities.
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 3. The counseling program also helps students: develop an understanding of themselves and of the rights and needs of others; learn to resolve conflicts; and set individual goals reflecting their interests, abilities, and aptitudes. Personal or social counseling may be provided in groups (e.g., peer relations) or in structured individual or small group multisession counseling that focuses on the specific concerns of the participant(s) (e.g., social skills, grief, or anger management).
 4. Parents and guardians shall receive written notification of short-term personal or social counseling of an individual or small-group nature. Parental or guardian consent is not required for short-term personal or social counseling and/or crisis intervention that is needed to maintain order, discipline, or a productive learning environment.

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Parents and guardians may request in writing to have their children excused from (opt out of) academic or career guidance, or personal or social counseling of a general nature at any time. An opt-out request will remain in effect from the day it is received by the school throughout the student's K-12 career in FCPS unless the opt-out request is rescinded by the parents or guardians in writing. A parent or guardian wanting to excuse his or her child from participation in the school counseling program should complete Attachment B and return it to the school office. Parents and guardians may also request in writing to allow their children to participate again, at any time they so choose.

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A parent or guardian who elects to opt out their child from participating in academic or career guidance will have sole responsibility to ensure that all academic and graduation requirements are fulfilled.

Parents and guardians may review materials to be used in school counseling programs at their child's school by contacting the school counselor. Information can also be found on the FCPS web site at:
www.fcps.edu/ss/StudentServices/Guidance/Guidance.htm.

SCHOOL COUNSELING SERVICES

OPT-OUT FORM

Complete and return this form only if you DO NOT want your child to participate in an aspect of the school counseling program.

An opt-out request will become effective from the day it is received by the school and will remain in effect throughout the student's K-12 career in Fairfax County Public Schools, unless the opt-out request is rescinded by his or her parent or guardian in writing.

I am requesting that my child _____, in grade _____, not participate in the following:

_____ Academic or career guidance that is provided by his or her school.

_____ Personal or social counseling that is provided by his or her school.

I understand that parental or guardian permission is not required for counseling and/or crisis intervention that is needed to maintain order, discipline, or a productive learning environment. I understand that, in electing to have my child excused from academic or career guidance, I shall have sole responsibility to ensure that all academic and graduation requirements are fulfilled.

(Date)

(Signature of Parent or Guardian)

Student's Name: _____
(Please Print)

Student's School: _____
(Please Print)