



What counseling services are provided to Florida public school students?

Counseling services are available to all students and must address whatever interferes with a student's ability to learn, to succeed, and to participate in the learning process. Although the content of counseling services addresses such results as social and personal adjustment, educational and career planning, and human growth and development, it is how these results enhance learning that justifies the existence of the program.¹ Counseling services promote student success through a focus on academic achievement; prevention and intervention activities; advocacy; and social, emotional, personal, and career development. Such services are provided by school guidance counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers.²

School psychological services are designed to enhance the well-being of students by identifying factors that impede students academically, socially, and emotionally. Psychological services emphasize aiding students through the provision of instructional support services to teachers and comprehensive evaluation services to students suspected of having disabilities.³

School social work services are provided to students, teachers, and school administrators. These services typically focus on the prevention, intervention, and remediation of problems related to learning, attendance, behavior, and school adjustment.⁴

School guidance counseling services are designed to promote student success through a focus on academic achievement, prevention, intervention, and advocacy. Such programs are designed to further the academic, social, personal, emotional, and career development of each student.⁵ School administrators, school principals, career counselors, teachers, and guidance counselors collaborate in this effort.⁶

¹ Florida Department of Education, Division of Public Schools, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, *Florida's School Counseling Framework*, 2010, at 5, available at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/FinalCounselFramework2010.pdf>.

² Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, Government Program Summaries, *Guidance and Student Support*, May 4, 2010, available at <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/profiles/2093/> (last visited July 20, 2010) [hereinafter *Guidance and Student Support*].

³ *Id.* All of Florida's public school students are eligible for psychological services. During the 2008-09 academic year, 12 school districts did not employ school psychologists. The remaining 55 school districts employed 1,400 school psychologists. *Id.*

⁴ *Id.* All public school students and their parents, teachers, and school administrators are eligible to receive school social work services. During the 2008-09 academic year, 21 school districts did not employ school social workers. The remaining 46 school districts employed 1,025 school social workers. *Id.*

⁵ Florida Department of Education, Division of Workforce Development, *Florida's School Counseling and Guidance Framework: A Comprehensive Student Development Program Model*, at 1 (2001), available at <http://www.fldoe.org/workforce/pdf/guidance.pdf> [hereinafter *Student Development Program Model*].

⁶ *Id.* at 12. All of Florida's public school students are eligible for guidance counseling. During the 2008-09 academic year, 67 school districts employed 5,996 guidance counselors. *Guidance and Student Support*, *supra* note 2.

Elementary school guidance counseling services are primarily focused on the development of student competencies necessary for grade-to-grade progression. Elementary schools must focus attention on areas such as positive self-concept, responsible behavior, broad career awareness, decision-making skills, interpersonal and communication skills, and diversity.⁷

In the middle grades, the focus of school guidance services shifts to academic and career planning. School guidance counselors provide direct on-site assistance to students and their families. Middle school guidance counselors should collaborate with the school leadership team, teachers, students, and parents to expand opportunities for students to build on current skills and develop effective learner skills and attitudes, explore self-interests and the world of work, and pursue more rigorous courses.⁸ Additionally, guidance counselors, students, and parents should explore academic and career fields, identify post-high school academic and career goals, and formulate an academic and career plan to meet those goals. In middle and high school, students use a variety of online interactive advisement, exploration, and planning tools to chart their course to graduation and on to college or a career.⁹

Academic and career exploration is also a key component of Florida's middle school promotion and high school graduation requirements. Middle school students must take a one-semester career and education planning course in seventh or eighth grade.¹⁰ By ninth grade, each student must have in place a personalized academic and career plan based on postsecondary and career goals.¹¹

What are the roles of school psychologists, social workers, and school guidance counselors?

School psychologists assess a student's ability and collaborate with other student support personnel to aid the development of academic improvement strategies for at-risk students. As a result of the evaluation process, school psychologists refer students to support and counseling services to improve student achievement.¹²

School social workers identify how learning, home, and community settings affect student success and may monitor a student's progress in such areas as attendance, academic performance, and behavior, in order to intervene when appropriate. The school social worker may submit a report or psycho-social assessment to school personnel.¹³

School guidance counselors evaluate students and participate in decisions relating to the promotion, remediation, and retention of students. Effective school guidance counselors must be able to work with administrators, faculty, students, parents, and members of the community to plan, implement, and evaluate comprehensive guidance and counseling programs. In advising students, counselors must identify needs, define priorities, and determine appropriate objectives.

⁷ *Id.* at 28.

⁸ Florida Department of Education, *2009-2010 Florida Counseling for Future Education Handbook*, at 7 (2009), available at http://files.facts.usf.edu/pdfDocuments/manuals/Handbook_0910.pdf [hereinafter *Education Handbook*].

⁹ *Id.* at 3-4.

¹⁰ Section 1003.4156(1)(a)5., F.S.

¹¹ Section 1007.21(2)(a), F.S.

¹² *Guidance and Student Support*, *supra* note 2.

¹³ *Id.*

Counselors must determine the personnel, physical resources, programs, and activities required to best serve the student.¹⁴

A school guidance counselor is required by law and the rules of the State Board of Education to be certified in guidance and counseling.¹⁵ For certification in guidance and counseling, a person must hold a master's or higher degree with a graduate major in guidance and counseling or counselor education; or a master's or higher degree with 30 semester hours of graduate credit in specified guidance and counseling courses.¹⁶

Are middle school students required to take a Career and Education Planning course?

Yes. Middle school students must complete a one-semester course in career and education planning in either seventh or eighth grade. Course instruction must result in the creation of a personalized academic and career plan for each student. It must include career exploration using the Florida CHOICES explorer or a comparable program and completion of an electronic personal education plan (ePep) using the Florida Academic Counseling and Tracking for Students online advising system (FACTS.org).¹⁷

What is a student's personalized academic and career plan?

The purpose of the personalized academic and career plan is to provide each student with a plan for pursuing their academic and career interests and goals. The plan should include information such as short and long-term goals; results of personal assessments such as interests, values, skills, and aptitudes; careers and career course groupings of interest; and an electronic personalized education plan (ePEP).¹⁸ Each student's plan must chart a course towards enrollment in a four-year college or university, community college plus university, or military academy degree; two-year postsecondary degree; postsecondary career certificate; immediate employment or entry-level military; or a combination of these destinations.¹⁹ The personalized academic and career plan must inform students of high school graduation requirements, high school assessment and college entrance test requirements, Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program requirements, state university and Florida college admission requirements, and opportunities through which a high school student may earn college credit, including Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Advanced International Certificate of Education, dual enrollment, career academy courses, and programs that lead to national industry certification.²⁰

¹⁴ *Student Development Program Model*, *supra* note 5, at 15.

¹⁵ Section 1012.55(1), F.S.; *see generally* s. 1012.56, F.S.

¹⁶ Rule 6A-4.0181, F.A.C.

¹⁷ Section 1003.4156(1)(a)5., F.S.; *see also* Florida Department of Education, *Middle School Reform - Frequently Asked Questions*, http://www.fldoe.org/APlusPlus/FAQ_MS.asp (last visited July 23, 2010).

¹⁸ *Id.* By the end of June 2009, 91 percent of 8th grade students had created an ePEP. FACTS.org, *Annual Report 2008-2009*, at 3 (2009), *available at* http://files.facts.usf.edu/pdfDocuments/communications/annualReports/Annual_Report_2008-09_web.pdf.

¹⁹ Section 1007.21(2)(a), F.S.

²⁰ Section 2, ch.2010-22, L.O.F., *amending* s. 1003.4156(1)(a)5., F.S.

The plan must be signed by the student, the student's guidance counselor or academic advisor, and the student's parent, and should become a portfolio of information that students can update as they continue their education and their career decision making process.²¹

What online career exploration and planning software is recommended for use in Florida public schools?

The Department of Education (DOE) recommends three programs for use by middle and high school students. The CHOICES Explorer and Career Futures programs are recommended for use by middle school students. The CHOICES Planner is recommended for use in high schools and may be used by postsecondary schools as well.²²

CHOICES Explorer is an online education and career exploration system that provides extensive libraries of education, career, and recreation articles. The site provides career profiles, post-secondary program descriptions, career videos, and other career exploration resources. Students can research individual academic subjects or take the Career Finder or Major Finder assessments to determine which academic, career, and majors interest them. Students may also combine their assessment results and career goals with the personalized education plan in FACTS.org.²³

Career Futures is career exploration and planning software available on CD-ROM that provides students with access to information on more than 650 occupations. It is designed to develop a student's self-awareness and career exploration skills. Career Futures employs hands-on activities that demonstrate how interests, education, earnings, and skills relate to the workplace. Students may begin developing career plans with the software and then access FACTS.org to build an ePEP for high school.²⁴

The CHOICES Planner is an online career information delivery system that helps students compare, connect, and choose from a database of occupational and educational options. Assessments include interests, skills, and abilities. All assessment and exploration results may be stored in an electronic portfolio.²⁵ School districts may purchase the CHOICES Explorer and Career Futures from DOE. The DOE makes the CHOICES Planner available to districts at no charge.²⁶ All three programs were developed by Bridges Transitions, Inc.²⁷

What is FACTS.org?

FACTS.org is a statewide online student advising system established and maintained by DOE and the Florida Center for Advising and Academic Support.²⁸ FACTS.org enables students to plan high school courses, track progress toward graduation, check eligibility for scholarships,

²¹ Section 1003.4156(1)(a)5., F.S.

²² Florida Department of Education, *Middle School Reform - Frequently Asked Questions*, http://www.fldoe.org/APlusPlus/FAQ_MS.asp (last visited July 23, 2010).

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ Bridges Transitions, Inc, *Products*, <http://www.bridges.com/us/home.html> (last visited July 23, 2010).

²⁸ *Facts.Org, Home Page*, <http://www.facts.org> (last visited July 23, 2010).

explore careers and postsecondary education opportunities, apply online to postsecondary institutions, and apply online for state and federal financial aid.²⁹

Students access the ePEP and High School Evaluations tools on FACTS.org. The ePEP is an interactive online planner that enables students to plot their coursework for every year of high school. Students choose courses based on their academic and career goals. The ePEP automatically populates each course in which the student enrolls, along with the student's grade when the course is completed. Guidance counselors can monitor the students' plan and leave comments for the student online.³⁰

Each high school student's ePEP must be reviewed annually and students, who enter high school without an ePEP, must be given assistance in creating a plan. Such students include out-of-state transfers and former private school and home education students.³¹

The High School Academic Evaluations tool enables students to evaluate their high school transcripts. A student may compare his or her transcript to the course requirements for graduation, Bright Futures Scholarships, State University System admission, and the Academic Competitiveness Grant; access his or her weighted Bright Futures grade point average; and view met and unmet scholarship and university admissions requirements.³²

What information must school districts provide to parents to assist them in directing their child's academic and career path?

Each district school board must annually report to the parent, each student's:

- ❖ Progress towards achieving state and district expectations for proficiency in reading, writing, science, and mathematics.
- ❖ Results on the statewide assessment test. This progress evaluation must be based on the student's classroom work, observations, tests, district and state assessments, and other relevant information. Progress reporting must be provided to the parent in writing.³³

School districts are also required to develop and disseminate a parent guide that includes:

- ❖ Grade promotion requirements.
- ❖ Academic proficiency requirements.
- ❖ Assessment, report cards, and progress reports.
- ❖ Teacher qualifications.
- ❖ School entry requirements.

²⁹ *Education Handbook*, *supra* note 8, at 3.

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ *Id.*; s. 1003.413(3)i, F.S.

³² *Education Handbook*, *supra* note 8, at 4. The federally funded Academic Competitiveness Grant was made available for the first time for the 2006-07 academic year for first-year college students who graduated from high school after January 1, 2006, and for second-year college students who graduated from high school after January 1, 2005. Federal Student Aid, Academic Competitiveness Grant, <http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/AcademicGrants.jsp> (last visited Dec. 3, 2010).

³³ Section 1008.25(8)(a), F.S.

- ❖ Services available for parents and their children, such as family literacy programs, mentoring, tutoring, college planning assistance, academic advisement, student counseling, and after-school programs.
- ❖ Parental involvement opportunities, such as parenting classes, adult education, school advisory councils, and school volunteer programs.
- ❖ Rigorous academic and career education programs and educational choice options.
- ❖ Classroom and test accommodations available for students with disabilities.³⁴

The DOE must also maintain a parent-response center to answer parent questions and resolve issues related to the child's education.³⁵

What accountability measures are currently in place to assure proper advisement and outcome?

Each school district must annually submit a district guidance report to the Commissioner of Education by June 30th. The guidance report must include, but is not limited to the following:

- ❖ An examination of student access to guidance counselors.
- ❖ Identification of the degree to which a district has adopted or implemented a guidance model program.
- ❖ An evaluation of information and training available to guidance counselors and career specialists to advise students on areas of critical need, labor market trends, and technical training requirements.
- ❖ Identification of the progress made toward incorporation of advisement best practices as identified by DOE.
- ❖ The actions taken to provide information to students for school-to-work transition.
- ❖ A guidance plan for the district.³⁶

Where can I get additional information?

Florida Department of Education

Florida Center for Advising & Academic Support/FACTS.org
(866) 324-2618
<http://www.facts.org>

Florida House of Representatives

Education Policy Council
(850) 488-7451
<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/>

³⁴ Section 1002.23(2), F.S.

³⁵ Section 1002.23(4), F.S.

³⁶ Section 1006.025, F.S.