




STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

March 30, 2020

TO: Complex Area Superintendents, Principals (All), District Educational Specialists, Public Charter School Executive Director, Public Charter School Directors, School Counselors, School-Based Behavioral Health Personnel

FROM: Heidi Armstrong 
Assistant Superintendent

SUBJECT: **Resources for School Counseling Programs during School Closure**

On Tuesday, March 24, 2020, the Hawaii State Department of Education (HIDOE) announced school facilities will remain closed to students through April 30, 2020. This decision is based on the latest guidance and information from health officials and elected leaders. Pending any changes due to COVID-19, traditional in-school instruction is on hold until schools reopen to students. Your continued flexibility in the work you do to support our students is recognized and appreciated. As our community works together to navigate these most challenging and unprecedented times, be reminded to take care of yourself and your family.

During the facilities' closure, the HIDOE schools will provide continuity of learning through both online and paper packet enrichment activities to all students. As schools prepare for continuity of learning, plans for delivering a comprehensive school counseling program should be included along with other educational services provided by the school. If distance counseling services include the use of online tools, plans should address equity and access issues to ensure students have fair access to computers and the internet.

Some additional areas for school support teams to consider include but are not limited to, identifying:

- A primary communication method to communicate community support resources and updates to students and families;
- A process to monitor students for emerging well-being needs;
- A system for staff to refer students for school-level and/or community support services;
- Systems to support the continuity of the counseling program and services during the school closure; and
- Legal and ethical issues when providing distance counseling services online.

Resources to support school teams in providing students with support during school closure include:

- [Resources for SEL, Counseling, Mental Health](#)
- [Continuity of Learning Resources](#)

- [HIDOE COVID-19 Information and Updates](#)
- [Office of Student Support Services Students with Disabilities Flyer](#)
- [SBBH FAQs - School Closure Guidance Document](#)

When students physically return to campuses after school closure, strategies that may aid in the transition include:

- providing a positive and supportive environment for students;
- facilitating social-emotional learning experiences or lessons;
- maintaining a structured and predictable schedule as much as possible; and
- providing opportunities for regular check-ins and self-reflection.

Recognize that it may take students time to adjust back to the routines of a regular school day. Monitor students for loss or regression of skills in the areas of behavior, social, and emotional well-being. School staff should be made aware that changes in these domains can be expected and are not uncommon.

Encourage staff to have patience. Responding to students with empathy and maintaining positive relationships will provide needed support through this transitional time. If concerns continue, ensure your school has a response system of support and interventions in place.

Remember that just as student well-being is important, so is the health and well-being of staff. Provide reminders for self-care and access to resources for mental health supports.

For questions about supporting students' emotional well-being, please contact Ayada Bonilla, Educational Specialist, Student Support Section, at (808) 305-9795 or email at Ayada.Bonilla@k12.hi.us.

For questions about School Counseling Programs or College and Career Counseling, please contact Theresa Sanchez, Educational Specialist, Student Support Section, at (808) 305-9756 or email at Theresa.Sanchez@k12.hi.us.

HA:ab

c: Superintendent
Deputy Superintendent
Assistant Superintendents
State Public Charter School Commission