

Issaquah School Based Mental Health Program FAQ

The school based mental health program was established to meet the mental health needs of students in a nurturing environment. The hope is to foster the well-being of the students in the Issaquah school district, so they are safe, healthy and ready to learn.

Why school based mental health?

Studies show that school based mental health programs help to eliminate barriers to accessing traditional mental health services for students. Students who utilize school based health centers can have fewer discipline problems, course failures and school absences.

What services do the school based mental health counselors provide?

The counselors offer confidential counseling and skill building on many topics including depression, anxiety, relationship problems, family concerns, grief and loss. They also have referrals for other community resources if needed.

Who can see the school based mental health counselor?

Any student in the Issaquah school district can be referred to a school based health counselor. Counselors will prioritize students with the highest need. Students in crisis, who do not have access to mental-health services elsewhere due to insurance or transportation barriers will be high priority.

Do students need parent permission for the counseling?

Students under the age of 13 must have parent permission to participate in the program. In accordance with state law, teens 13 and older may receive confidential mental health counseling without parental knowledge or permission.

Are the school based mental health counselors certified?

All of the school based mental health counselors are licensed independent clinical social workers (LICSWs). Their licensure allows them to diagnose and treat mental health conditions. All staff have prior experience in mental health assessment and counseling. As Swedish employees they also have access to other professionals for consultation, like a child psychologist and psychiatrist through Children's Hospital and our other Teen Health Center in Ballard.

How are they funded?

Starting in the 2018-2019 school year, thanks to the voter approved February 2018 levy, all schools in the Issaquah School District will have a designated school based mental health counselor. Management of staff and continued education is provided by Swedish for our contracted staff.

Is counseling available in the summer?

No. The school based mental health counselors follow the school's calendars. Counselors will recommend transitions to other resources during the summer months.

How are parents involved?

This service is designed for students, but we recognize that parents play an integral role in supporting their children's emotional health and involvement, and collaboration with school based health counseling is encouraged. Family counseling needs should be addressed in an outpatient setting and the school based mental health counselors can refer families to these services.

What if we want to refer a student?

Referrals are accepted from anyone who has a concern about a student and can be made by contacting the academic counselor or counseling center. The school based mental health counselor assigned to the student's school will reach out to the referred individual about the concerns. The service is voluntary and students are not required to utilize these services.

School based mental health counselors are bound by HIPAA laws and will not divulge any confidential information without written consent. In the event a student is at serious risk for harming themselves or others, or in a case of child abuse or neglect, school staff, parents and authorities as appropriate will be involved.

What about Swedish?

Swedish is one of the largest providers of health care services in the region. We are invested in the health of the community and very excited about this opportunity to partner with the Issaquah school district. We also have a Teen Health Center at Ballard High School in Seattle. For more information about Swedish, please visit www.swedish.org/issaquah.