

Secondary School Counseling – Frequently Asked Questions

How can the school counselor help my child?

School counselors support students with social-emotional concerns such as grief, divorce, friendship challenges, and stress. They also assist with behavioral concerns and academic struggles. Counselors help students develop coping skills, self-regulation strategies, problem-solving skills, and emotional awareness.

How do students see the school counselor?

All students work with the school counselor through classroom lessons and school-wide supports. For individual needs, students may be referred by teachers, administrators, or parents. Students may also request to see the counselor and often “check in” when they need support.

Is what my child says confidential?

Conversations with the school counselor are private. However, confidentiality cannot be maintained if a student shares information about safety concerns, abuse, or neglect, as counselors are required to follow mandatory reporting laws. Counselors strive to build trust with students while also keeping parents informed of significant concerns.

Will I be notified if my child meets with the counselor?

For brief, one-time check-ins, parents may not always be notified. However, if a student is participating in ongoing or frequent counseling sessions, parents will be contacted and consent will be obtained.

What topics are addressed in counseling groups?

Small counseling groups may focus on topics such as social skills, friendship, positive behavior, anger management, study skills, and adjusting to family changes.

Is school counseling the same as therapy?

No. School counseling is short-term, solution-focused, and educational in nature. If a student needs more intensive or long-term support, the school counselor can help families connect with community mental health providers or other supportive services.

Additional Supports Provided by our TASD School Counselors

In addition to the services listed above, school counselors provide support in several other areas that contribute to students’ overall well-being and success in school. Counselors help students develop goal-setting and decision-making skills, build resilience, improve communication and conflict-resolution skills, and adjust to school transitions such as moving between grade levels or entering a new school. They may also assist students with organization and time-management strategies, peer relationship challenges, and building a positive school experience. School counselors collaborate with teachers, administrators, and families to ensure students receive the support they need to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

What is a secondary school counselor?

Secondary school counselors support students in grades 6–12 as they navigate academics, career exploration, postsecondary planning, and social/emotional development. At this level, counselors play a critical role in helping students plan for graduation and life after high school—whether that includes college, technical training, military service, or entering the workforce.

They work collaboratively with administrators, teachers, parents, and community partners to remove barriers to success and ensure all students are on track to meet their goals. The overall mission of a secondary school counselor is to create a supportive, safe environment while helping students build the skills needed for independence and future success.

What do secondary counselors do?

Secondary school counselors provide a comprehensive program that includes:

- **Academic Planning & Scheduling:** Assisting students with course selection, credit tracking, and ensuring they meet graduation requirements
- **Career & College Readiness:** Supporting career exploration, college applications, financial aid (FAFSA), scholarships, resumes, and interview skills
- **Individual & Group Counseling:** Addressing social/emotional needs such as stress, anxiety, peer relationships, motivation, and decision-making
- **Crisis Response & Support:** Providing immediate support during crises and coordinating with families and outside agencies
- **Postsecondary Planning:** Helping students develop and implement plans for life after graduation
- **Collaboration:** Working with teachers, families, and support staff to monitor progress and intervene when needed

At the secondary level, counselors often work proactively with students to set goals, monitor progress, and adjust plans as students grow and their interests evolve.

How does counseling actually happen?

Secondary students have more independence in accessing counseling services. They may:

- Request an appointment directly (in person, email, or scheduling system)
- Be referred by a teacher, parent, or administrator
- Meet with counselors during scheduled check-ins for academic planning or postsecondary preparation

Counseling may be short-term and solution-focused (helping a student navigate a situation or decision), or it may involve ongoing support for academic or emotional concerns.

If a student begins meeting regularly for more in-depth support, parents/guardians will be notified. When needs extend beyond the school setting, counselors will help connect families with appropriate community resources or mental health providers.

My child is being bullied at school, what should I do?

Encourage your child to speak up and report the situation to a trusted adult at school. At the secondary level, students may be hesitant to report concerns, so reinforcing that reporting is a positive and important step is key.

Contact the school to share your concerns so staff can investigate and respond appropriately. School counselors work with students to develop strategies for handling difficult peer situations, building confidence, and maintaining safety. They also collaborate with administration to ensure a supportive school environment.

How do school counselors help with mental health?

Secondary school counselors support student mental health by providing direct services and helping students access additional support when needed. At this level, students often face increased academic pressure, social challenges, and decisions about their future.

Counselors help students:

- Manage stress, anxiety, and academic pressure
- Navigate peer relationships and social challenges
- Build coping skills, resilience, and self-advocacy
- Develop decision-making and problem-solving skills
- Balance school, activities, work, and personal responsibilities

While school counselors provide short-term support, they also play an essential role in identifying when a student may need more intensive services and connecting families to outside mental health providers.

The school counselors work with students individually and in groups to address concerns such as anxiety, depression, stress, grief, peer conflict, and family challenges. Through these interactions, counselors help students develop coping strategies, improve emotional regulation, and build problem-solving skills.

They also take a proactive approach by delivering classroom lessons and school-wide programs that focus on social-emotional learning, resilience, and healthy decision-making. This helps prevent issues from escalating and promotes a positive school climate.

In addition, school counselors collaborate with teachers, administrators, and families to better understand student needs and create supportive plans. When a student requires more intensive or ongoing mental health support, counselors help connect families with outside providers such as therapists, community agencies, or school-based mental health services. They may also assist with crisis response and ensure students have a safety plan when needed.

Overall, school counselors serve as a key link between students, families, the school, and mental health resources—helping ensure students feel supported, understood, and equipped to succeed both academically and emotionally.

How do I get connected to community supports or services?

If your child needs extra support—social, emotional, or mental health—here’s how to get connected:

1. Talk to the School Counselor -Share your concerns. Counselors can help guide you and make referrals to trusted providers.
2. Reach out to the Titusville Area School District Community Resource Coordinator, Courtney Master at 814-657-3226 or by email: cmaster@gorockets.org or cmaster@fscas.org
3. Use School Partnerships-Our district works with local mental health clinics and family support agencies. Some services may be available on-site or at no cost.
4. Access Local Resources-Community organizations, health departments, and children’s services offer counseling, support groups, and programs for families.
5. Follow Up-Stay in touch with the counselor and providers to make sure your child is getting the support they need.

How to Access School Counseling Services

Parents or guardians who have concerns about their child's academic, social, or emotional well-being may contact the school counselor directly by phone or email to discuss available supports or request services.

Building(s)	School Counselor(s)	Phone: 814-827-2715
Titusville Middle School	Mrs. Stephanie Knapp sknapp@gorockets.org	Extension 2430
	Mrs. Brooke Martin bmartin@gorockets.org	Extension 2431
Titusville Middle School Social Worker	Mrs. Deanna Wakefield dwakefield@gorockets.org	Extension 2501
Titusville High School	Mr. Josh Albright jalbright@gorockets.org	Extension 1430
	Ms. Bridget O'Neill boneill@gorockets.org	Extension 1431
Titusville High School Social Worker	Ms. Stacey Ross sross@gorockets.org	Extension 1424
Career Counselor	Mrs. Mary Lane	Extension 1423

School Counseling Hot Topics

School Transitions in TASD

In the **Titusville Area School District**, two major school transitions for secondary students can be exciting but sometimes stressful for students:

1. Moving to **middle school in Grade 6**
2. Moving to the **high school in Grade 9**

Our school counseling department plans activities to support students during these transitions and help them feel confident and prepared.

Transition to Titusville Middle School

Fifth grade students begin preparing for middle school in the **spring**, working closely with their school counselor. Activities include:

- Completing a survey about their interests and concerns
- Learning how to use a locker “lock”
- Having conversations about the changes ahead

Students will also attend a **“Move Up Day”**, where they will:

- Tour the middle school
- Meet the principals and counselors
- Participate in other transition activities

Transition to Titusville High School

Eighth-grade students are introduced to their high school before the end of the school year. Students will participate in visits and activities designed to support a smooth transition, where they can:

- Tour the high school building, classrooms, and common areas such as the cafeteria, gym, and library
- Meet the principal, assistant principals, and key administrators
- Meet teachers, counselors, and support staff for their incoming grade
- Learn about high school schedules, course registration, and elective options
- Explore extracurricular activities, clubs, and athletic programs available at the high school
- Attend the Summer Academy and other “move-up” activities designed to help incoming 9th-grade students build academic skills and confidence
- Participate in orientation sessions focused on social-emotional skills, study strategies, and time management
- Receive information about student support services, including guidance counseling, mental health resources, and academic tutoring

These experiences help students become familiar with the larger school environment, develop positive relationships with staff and peers, reduce anxiety, and feel confident and prepared as they begin their high school journey.

How Parents Can Help

Parents and guardians play a key role in easing transition anxiety. You can support your child by:

- Talking openly about the upcoming changes
- Establishing routines at home
- Promoting independence in daily tasks
- Encouraging positive attitudes toward meeting new people

These steps help children feel more confident, excited, and ready for a smooth transition to their next school experience.

Secondary Students and Social Media

Social media includes platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube. While these platforms can offer opportunities for learning, creativity, and social connection, research shows that overuse or unsafe use can contribute to mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and disrupted sleep. Adolescents' social, emotional, and cognitive development makes guidance and open communication essential.

Middle School Students (Grades 6–8)

- **Establish boundaries:** Set reasonable limits for daily screen time and app usage. Encourage breaks from screens to promote physical activity, hobbies, and face-to-face social interaction.
- **Discuss online safety:** Teach students about privacy settings, avoiding sharing personal information, and how to recognize potentially unsafe contacts.
- **Promote responsible communication:** Talk about the effects of cyberbullying, mean comments, and online arguments. Emphasize kindness and respectful interaction online.
- **Monitor, but respect privacy:** Check in on social media activity periodically, while also encouraging independence and trust.

High School Students (Grades 9–12)

- **Encourage self-awareness:** Help students reflect on how social media affects their mood, mental health, and academic performance. Encourage them to recognize when online interactions are stressful or harmful.
- **Teach digital citizenship:** Discuss the long-term impact of online behavior, including the permanence of posts, the importance of respectful communication, and the risks of sharing sensitive content.
- **Support healthy habits:** Encourage balance between social media, school, extracurricular activities, physical exercise, and offline friendships.
- **Provide resources:** Share strategies for managing stress, anxiety, or negative experiences online. Remind students they can reach out to trusted adults, counselors, or mental health professionals.

General Recommendations for Families and Students

- **Create a family social media plan:** Set clear rules and expectations together. Revisit these guidelines regularly as students grow.
- **Promote critical thinking:** Encourage questioning the accuracy of information online and recognizing manipulative content, ads, or trends.
- **Model healthy use:** Adults should model balanced social media use and demonstrate respectful online behavior.
- **Encourage open dialogue:** Maintain regular conversations about online experiences, challenges, and feelings without judgment.

By combining guidance, open communication, and education about safe and responsible use, families can help adolescents navigate social media in ways that support their mental health, safety, and overall development.