



Cyberspace

Objectives

By the time you have completed this chapter, you should be able to:

- Discuss the influence technology has on the school counseling profession
- Identify the different aspects of the ASCA National Model related to the use of technology in school counseling
- Understand safety precautions students, school counselors and parents/guardians can take while interacting on social media websites
- Reflect on the consequences of unprofessional behavior on websites
- Discuss policies and regulations regarding the use of technological devices in schools and the appropriate response taken in the case of a breach of those policies

Ethical Standards Addressed in This Chapter

The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016a) most relevant to this chapter are the following:

- School counselors demonstrate appropriate selection and use of technology and software applications to enhance students' academic, career and social/emotional development. Attention is given to the ethical and legal considerations of technological applications, including confidentiality concerns, security issues, potential limitations and benefits and communication practices in electronic media (A.14.a).
- School counselors advocate for equal access to technology for all students (A.14.f).
- School counselors implement procedures for students to follow in both emergency and nonemergency situations when the school counselor is not available (A.15.c).
- School counselors recognize and mitigate the limitation of virtual/distance school counseling confidentiality, which may include unintended viewers or recipients (A.15.d).

The full text of the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors is available at www.schoolcounselor.org.

Introduction

Technology has influenced the school counseling profession, including fundamentally altering the way school counselors interact with students, school personnel, parents/guardians and school counseling supervisors. School counselors are using technology in their school counseling programs and are often comfortable with technology. In a 2017 survey by Steele, Stone and Nuckols, 62.2 percent of the ASCA member respondents agreed or strongly agreed they like to experiment with new technologies. Only 6.5 percent strongly disagreed.

School counselors can now disseminate new knowledge and best practices through their institutions' available technology mechanisms for the purpose of interacting and communicating with their students, families, co-workers and other stakeholders.

The prevalence of educators using technology was the focus of a study from Gray, Thomas, and Lewis (2010): 96 percent of educators use educational technology for word processing, 61 percent for spreadsheets and graphing programs, 80 percent to manage student records, 63 percent to deliver presentations and 94 percent for Internet searches of resources and information. A March 2017 survey of ASCA members showed similar results (Steele, Stone & Nuckols, 2017). Respondents rated nine devices or applications as to frequency of use within their professional tasks: never, rarely, occasionally, moderate amount, great deal. The percentages for the two highest-use ratings show a sizable number of ASCA members are using technology in their work:

Device or Application	Percentage who rated "moderate use" or "a great deal of use"
Computer	99.2 percent
Internet	98.8 percent
Student information system	95.9 percent
Document sharing, e.g. Google Docs	82.7 percent
iPhone/smart phone or other mobile device	45.8 percent
School counseling department website	35.1 percent
School counseling department blog, Twitter, Facebook or other social media	17.7 percent
Instant messaging	17.6 percent
Video conferencing program, e.g. Skype	8.8 percent

E-mail has significantly changed the way school counselors communicate with parent/guardians, students, families, teachers and administrators. E-mail is now a necessary part of school counselors' approach to implementing their program. In the Steele, Stone and Nuckols (2017) survey 76.8 percent of the respondents said they use e-mail to communicate with students and/or families, and 98.5 percent can access the school district e-mail remotely. School counselors are even able to access student data remotely (83.6 percent).

School counselors are wired even during off hours. According to this same survey, 47.5 percent of respondents check their e-mail regularly outside of work hours, 25.4 percent check it occasionally, and only 27.1 percent check it rarely or not at all. Sixty-four percent of respondents have their work e-mail connected to an iPad, personal phone or other personal mobile device.

This same survey demonstrated that e-mail is used as a way to communicate with students and/or families for academic planning (45.7 percent), college counseling (32.9 percent) and career counseling (25.8 percent). E-mail is also used to offer resources such as scholarship/program opportunities (43.6 percent). A sizable percentage of the work school counselors do with families, students and other staff members is through e-mail, especially with other school staff.

How often do you use e-mail to communicate with:

	Students/families	School staff
Schedule meetings	85.3 percent	94.3 percent
Discuss concerns regarding students' academic progress	65.5 percent	78.8 percent
Discuss social/emotional concerns	51.3 percent	68.6 percent
Share school or counseling department bulletins or information	57.2 percent	64.2 percent
Send surveys and other feedback solicitations regarding your school counseling program	35.1 percent	45.8 percent

(Steele, Stone & Nuckols, 2017)

Face-to-face interaction is still the primary means of communicating with all stakeholders, but e-mail trumps phone calls as a means for school counselors to communicate with other educators (Steele, Stone & Nuckols, 2017).

Within the time you spend communicating with students and families, what percentage do you use each of the following means of communication:

Respondents spending half or more than half their time in this mode of communication.

Communication method	Students/families	School staff
Face-to-face	65 percent	63.4 percent
Phone	26.1 percent	15 percent
E-mail	23 percent	56 percent
Video conferencing	1.1 percent	1.3 percent
Instant messaging	1.1 percent	2.4 percent
Texting	1.4 percent	3.1 percent

One of the advantages of using technology within the school counseling practice is the access it affords as a common platform for communication and information dissemination. Technology is viewed as an essential component of life for students in today's schools. Integrating and using technological advancements show the school counselor is keeping up and trying to stay engaged with students and parents/guardians (Hayden Poynton & Sabella, 2010).

There are approximately 400 virtual schools, which enrolled close to 261,000 students (Miron & Gulosino, 2016) and approximately 39 states with some type of online public school courses to resident students. Some states offer full online high school diploma programs, while others offer a limited number of virtual courses (Littlefield, n.d.). For example, Florida Virtual School (FLVS) is a public school that is free to any Florida resident and is completely online. FLVS offers 120 courses, from geometry to advanced placement art history. FLVS has eight school counselors, each of whom covers a portion of the state. FLVS' website is full of webinars the school counselors provide for the students, ranging from self-harm topics to step-by-step instructions for completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

As more and more states and private enterprises are offering alternatives to traditional brick-and-mortar instruction, more school counselors will become part of what Tracy Steele, Stanford Online High School counselor, describes as a valid, much-needed alternative for some students. Steele explains that students come to online high schools for many different reasons. Some students need choices in their curriculum, an unorthodox schedule, credit recovery, rigorous coursework they cannot find at their local school or relief from the social pressures of a traditional high school. These students deserve to have access to a school counselor who can provide support and guidance in the many ways school counselors do at traditional brick-and-mortar schools" (Steele, personal communication, March 2017).

ASCA NATIONAL MODEL AND TECHNOLOGY

It is more efficient and effective to implement the ASCA National Model through the use of technology. The four components of a comprehensive school counseling program are: foundation, management, accountability and delivery. The delivery component is 80 percent or more of the ASCA National Model and is significantly aided by the use of technology (ASCA, 2012a).

Direct Student Services

Within the delivery component of the ASCA National Model are direct and indirect services. Direct services are in-person interactions between school counselors and students and include: core curriculum, individual student planning and responsive services (ASCA, 2012a). School counseling delivery can include synchronous and asynchronous online delivery where one is not physically co-located with the student, thus, person-to-person rather than in-person.

Core curriculum: School counseling core curriculum is structured lessons built around competencies for students' developmental level. The core curriculum is delivered throughout the school's overall curriculum and is systematically presented by school counselors in collaboration with other professional educators in K–12 classroom and group activities (ASCA,

2012a). When asked how often, if at all, they deliver or perform school counseling curriculum such as structured lessons, events or activities in an online setting, 973 ASCA members responded as follows:

<i>A great deal</i>	7.6 percent
<i>A moderate amount</i>	11.2 percent
<i>Occasionally</i>	12.3 percent
<i>Rarely</i>	12.2 percent
<i>Never</i>	56.6 percent

(Steele, Stone & Nuckols, 2017)

Individual student planning: Individual student planning is a systemic, ongoing set of activities to help students set and reach goals for their future plans. College and career readiness is just one area where school counselors are aided by technology in individual student planning. For school counselors to adequately equip students with valuable information about college and career readiness they must access the same technology resources as students and parents (Hayden, Poynton & Sabella, 2010).

One technology we know teens use on a daily basis is text messaging. For many teens, texting is their dominant form of communication with their friends. The Pew Research Center notes that 88 percent of teens text their friends occasionally, while 55 percent do so daily (Lenhart, August, 2015). Therefore, school counselors can leverage texting to communicate proactively with their students in the area of individual student planning. Text messaging as a promising component of enhancing individual student planning includes: timely reminders about tasks and deadlines and the ability to help students break down large projects into manageable tasks. The use of automated texts also frees up school counselors to focus on more individualized and unique support. Although text messaging interventions have shown to be successful in the area of college planning and matriculation (Castleman & Page, 2014), these same benefits might be more widely utilized in the various individual student planning capacities such as transitions from eighth to ninth grade, career planning and high school graduation planning.

According to the Steele, Stone and Nuckols (2017) survey, technology is now used at least occasionally for online remote delivery of individual student planning by 32.6 percent of the 973 ASCA members responding.

How often, if at all, do you deliver or perform advisement to help students establish personal goals and future plans using technology:

<i>A great deal</i>	8.4 percent
<i>A moderate amount</i>	10.3 percent
<i>Occasionally</i>	13.9 percent
<i>Rarely</i>	17.2 percent
<i>Never</i>	50.3 percent

(Steele, Stone & Nuckols, 2017)

Responsive services: Responsive services are activities designed to meet students' immediate needs and concerns. Responsive services include individual or small-group counseling or crisis response (ASCA National Model, 2012a).

According to this same survey (Steele, Stone & Nuckols, 2017), technology is now used at least occasionally for online remote delivery of responsive services by 28.3 percent of the 973 ASCA members responding.

How often, if at all, do you deliver or perform group counseling, referrals, psycho-education, peer helping, consultation with other stakeholders (including parents, educators) using technology:

<i>A great deal:</i>	<i>8 percent</i>
<i>A moderate amount:</i>	<i>9.9 percent</i>
<i>Occasionally:</i>	<i>10.4 percent</i>
<i>Rarely:</i>	<i>13.9 percent</i>
<i>Never:</i>	<i>57.7 percent</i>

Indirect Student Services

Indirect services are provided on behalf of students as a result of school counselors’ interactions with others. These services are delivered through strategies such as referrals, consultation and collaboration. ASCA member respondents indicated how frequently they used an online or remote setting for system support.

How often, if at all, do you use technology for system support (includes professional development, consultation, collaboration, program management, operations):

<i>A great deal.</i>	<i>9 percent</i>
<i>A moderate amount</i>	<i>19 percent</i>
<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>23 percent</i>
<i>Rarely</i>	<i>17 percent</i>
<i>Never</i>	<i>32 percent</i>

(Steele, Stone & Nuckols, 2017)

In addition to technology contributing to the delivery component of the ASCA National Model, data use under the management component happens more efficiently with technology. A school counselor has access to computer programs to manage and analyze student data. Curriculum, small-group and closing-the-gap action plans are all positively affected by technology (ASCA, 2012a; Hayden, Poynton & Sabella, 2010).

Finding their technological voice helps school counselors with closing-the-gap action plans to demonstrate the discrepancies between those students who are advantaged and those students who are being left out of the success equation. Technology increases effective advocacy by helping school counselors connect students to challenging coursework, safety nets and opportunities.

In the accountability component, technology helps school counselors demonstrate the effectiveness of the school counseling program in measurable terms. School counselors analyze school and school counseling program data to determine how students are different as a result of the school counseling program. School counselors use that information to show the impact of the school counseling program on student achievement, attendance and behavior. The data are then used to guide future action and improve future results for all students. It is easy to see how school counselors can incorporate technology to improve this process (ASCA, 2012a; Hayden, Poynton & Sabella, 2010).

School districts are equipped to maintain student information in database systems, unleashing the power of simple and complex data analyses to identify and track student outcomes. Districts and school counselors with data access can cross-tabulate data to look at more than one factor at a time. For example, data on the students with the highest number of discipline referrals can be cross-tabulated with factors such as grades and attendance to discover factors for intervention and measure outcomes.

ASCA AND THE AMERICAN COUNSELING ASSOCIATIONS' POSITION ON TECHNOLOGY

ASCA has issued a position statement, *The School Counselor and Student Safety and the Use of Technology* (ASCA, 2012c), which supports school counselors in encouraging students to take full advantage of technological resources. The collaboration of school counselors, educators, parents and law enforcement officials is necessary to ensure students' protection and aid in disclosing possible risks of Internet use. Risks constantly increase as more students access and use the Internet. Hence, students must be taught to excel in an industrialized world where high-paying jobs and business growth are dependent on technology (ASCA, 2012c). The ability to navigate technological devices determines how students survive and excel globally. As early as the postsecondary level, students must be able to use technology and be aware of their "digital footprint," which allows them to be vulnerable to privacy invasion and may even jeopardize their safety (ASCA, 2012c). Other behavioral, safety and privacy risks students may face due to technology are:

- online addictions
- invasion of privacy and disclosure of personal information
- inappropriate online communications
- easy access to inappropriate media
- cheating and copyright infringement
- cyberbullying/harassment
- sexual predators

(ASCA, 2012c)

School counselors can be part of the collaborative team that helps educate parents/guardians and students about the dangers of the Internet. Parents/guardians and school personnel can collaborate with school counselors to advise students of the appropriate use of technology that will advance academic achievement and social/emotional achievement. Some actions school counselors can take to promote the safe use of technology are:

- collaborate on the development of school policies
- respond to online incidents affecting conditions for learning
- assist the community in detecting at-risk behavior
- address digital citizenship: technology literacy, privacy, reputation and social awareness

School counselors engage in professional development to improve and maintain digital literacy, which, coupled with expertise in human development, allows them to provide educators and families with guidelines for the appropriate use of technology by students (ASCA, 2012c).

School counselors must always consider actions that are in students' best interest when using and advising students about technology. Technology has many advantages for students in today's society, such as providing opportunities for growth, learning, exploration, communication, networking and collaboration (ASCA, 2012c). However, students are

especially vulnerable to the benefits and risks of technology. Therefore, school counselors, school personnel and parents/guardians can collaborate to promote Internet safety.

The American Counseling Association (2014) addresses the use of technology in counseling. It is essential that counselors (a) ascertain the legal and ethical requirements of their jurisdiction and that of the client; (b) assess clients' knowledge and ability related to technology; (c) determine client's access to private locations; (d) discuss confidentiality, security and encryption; and (e) provide clients alternate methods of communication in the case of technology failure. ACA requires all confidential communication occur via encrypted channels.

Getting Started: What Would You Do?

In a departure from the other chapters in the book there will be four cases answered at the end of the chapter. A counselor educator, an ASCA assistant director and a practicing school counselor who are experts in the field of school counseling and technology will weigh in on some critical issues. Before you read their responses, formulate in your own mind how you would approach this ethical dilemma.

Social/Emotional Counseling in a Virtual World

I've just been hired as a school counselor at a virtual high school. How can I meet students' social/emotional needs online?

Electronic Storage of Student Information

Alexis, a middle school counselor, has been working diligently to better integrate technology in her work so she can more effectively and efficiently help students. She has found Google Drive to be especially helpful. Are there precautions, uses and/or advantages to using Google Drive?

Confidentiality in a Virtual High School

The administration is looking to you for suggestions regarding procedures the school counseling department will use for the section of the server where all educators are to keep notes on every student. The notes section is to record summaries of e-mails, phone calls, text messages and face-to-face interactions. The principal explains it is not optional. Every faculty and administrative staff member must use this section so collaboration can happen to optimize each student's education. This means it will be visible to all educators at the school. You are uneasy about the fact that school counselors' notes will be there for all educators to see. What will you advocate for when you meet with the principal?

Online Counseling and Suicidal Ideation

Seth, one of your students in your online high school, has been in a tailspin academically and emotionally since his mother died a year ago. His electronic conversations about death were forwarded to you by a concerned friend. Seth's father feels his son is being overly dramatic and does not believe Seth would ever harm himself. Then, in a panicked call to you, Seth describes using his father's gun or pills and ending it all. You keep Seth on the phone while you try to get his father on another line, but Seth informs you his father's cell phone is ringing right next to him as his father forgot to take it with him. He says he must go and hangs up the phone with you abruptly. What do you do?

Working Through Case Studies

SCHOOL COUNSELORS' USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Your colleague brags about her refusal to learn anything about technology. She does not access student data in determining program goals nor does she use online technology for even simple approaches such as e-mail. This technology-free practice causes additional work for the office staff and her fellow school counselors. Are there legal and ethical implications for her behavior?

Points to Consider

Communication and information sharing through online technology are fast becoming integral components of school counselors' ethical practice. To be relevant and effective school counselors have to work diligently to be competent and efficient with online communication and information technology. The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016a) encourage school counselors to "promote the benefits of and clarify the limitations of various appropriate technological applications" (A.14.d.). The Council on the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) requires preparation programs to ensure school counseling students are prepared to use technology to implement a comprehensive school counseling program. Online communication can offer school counselors a diverse set of effective modes of remote interaction to support professional development, networking and consultation.

In a 2017 study by Steele, Stone and Nuckols, 973 ASCA members responded to a survey about technology. Nearly half of the school counselors reported using online technology at least occasionally in the areas of professional development, consultation, collaboration, program management and operations. One out of four respondents indicated using online technologies at least occasionally in delivering classroom lessons, events, activities and student planning tasks such as advising. Data-driven decision making, an important part of the school counselor's job, is enhanced by using technology to collect, disaggregate and report data. Important communication with students can be facilitated through online technologies rather than relying solely on infrequent, isolated, individual appointments or access to classrooms for lessons. Continually seeking professional development in technology to enhance capabilities is the standard of care and ethical practice required of school counselors.

PERSONAL LIFE AND ELECTRONIC PICTURES

The cameras are taking it all in as you celebrate a friend's bachelorette party. You end up drinking too much, and pictures surface on Facebook, where it looks like your hand is on the crotch of the male dancer hired for the occasion. In your words, you truly look "awful, drunk and vulgar." Someone forwarded the picture to your principal, who is considering taking action against you. Can you be disciplined or terminated for your behavior?

Points to Consider

In the past, school counselors found it easy to separate their personal and professional lives, but now, with the emergence of electronic media, the lines are easily blurred. Standard of care, the benchmark defining what the reasonable, competent educator would do, is a high standard for school counselors specifically and educators in general (see the Professionalism Chapter for more information on standard of care). Through technology, some educators have been caught irreparably damaging their image in moments of lapsed judgment. Many educators have been terminated or reprimanded because of personal messages displayed on their social networking profiles. Ginger D’Amico was almost terminated following a bachelorette party. Her colleagues posted a picture of her and a male stripper (Sostek, 2010). She was consequently suspended from her job although she immediately requested the removal of the picture upon discovering it. Dozens of cases demonstrate educators can and do lose their job over online comments and pictures. For example, a special education teacher was penalized by her school district for posting a comment on her profile that said, “You’re a retard, but I love you” (Shapira, 2008). Other teachers have been dismissed for posting sexually suggestive pictures (Di Marzo, 2012). June Talvitie-Siple, a math teacher, was forced into retirement after posting a comment (easily viewable by the public) stating that the people in her community were “snobby” and her students were “germ bags” (Manning, 2010).

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SCHOOL COUNSELORS

You have always been told by other educators to refrain from having a professional Facebook site. Now all around you schools and school counselors are doing just that. You are always struggling with ways to increase outreach with students on critical timely information about career and college admissions. You have decided to develop a Facebook page. What are the legal and ethical advantages and potential pitfalls you need to address, if any?

Points to Consider

It comes as no surprise that educators are among the millions of users of Facebook and Twitter (Smith, 2013). Out of necessity and problem behavior, school districts are implementing policies and regulations controlling social interactions between educators and students (Lehrer, 2011). A number of states have passed laws or policies limiting student/educator contact in cyberspace to avoid improper student/educator relationships (Puzio, 2013; Amy Hestir Student Protection Act, 2011). The Association of American Educators (2011) proposes that professional educators must “act with conscientious effort to exemplify the highest ethical standards (p.1).” ASCA members indicate they infrequently interact with students or families using social media, but when they do, it is often through Facebook.

If you interact with students and/or families on social media, which do you use for that interaction?

Facebook	10.7 percent
Twitter	13.6 percent
Instagra	2.9 percent
LinkedIn	0.7 percent
Do not interact with students/families on social media	78.9 percent

(Steele, Stone & Nuckols, 2017)

Findings from an investigation by the Associated Press between 2001 and 2005 reveal that 75 Missouri educators had been stripped of their teaching licenses because of sexual relationships with students and inappropriate online message sharing with students. Missouri implemented the Amy Hestir Student Protection Act, now called Missouri Facebook Statute, which prohibits public school teachers from utilizing any form of social media granting them exclusive access to students. Louisiana has followed Missouri's lead by passing legislation that makes Facebook interaction between educators and students illegal (Miller, 2011).

When schools, school counselors, teachers or administrators develop Facebook pages as supportive education outreach to students, they have the added responsibility to ensure students are technologically literate, understand privacy regulations, are aware of the consequences of building a negative reputation and understand the importance of social awareness (Internet Keep Safe Coalition [iKeepSafe] & American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012). Kolmes (2009a, 2009b) suggested school counselors do not friend, follow or be followed by students on personal Facebook accounts. Other recommendations by Jencius (2009) are to keep personal and professional Facebook and Twitter pages separate, reserve your professional name for messages sent through professional accounts, refrain from using inappropriate user names on personal accounts, provide students with a written policy regarding work hours and approximate response times, avoid frequent visits to students' Twitter feed or Facebook pages and ensure school, agency or institution policies are followed regarding social media (personal communication, November 2012).

Do your students or families have access to your personal and/or professional social media accounts?

<i>Professional account</i>	<i>21.6 percent</i>
<i>Personal account</i>	<i>1.4 percent</i>
<i>Both professional and personal account</i>	<i>3.7 percent</i>
<i>Students/families do not have access to my social media</i>	<i>73.2 percent</i>

(Steele, Stone & Nuckols, 2017)

It is helpful if school officials work together to ensure all students have access to and are knowledgeable about online educational outreach information. Students know, but it cannot be assumed they understand, that privacy on Facebook or other social media sites is often not secure. The privacy of student posts cannot be guaranteed (iKeepSafe & ASCA, 2012).

PROFESSIONAL DISTANCE AND CYBERSPACE

You are a school counselor who is technologically savvy, and you encourage your students to take advantage of your willingness to engage with them more frequently through technology. You find your tweets, texts messages, instant messages, video chats and Facebook postings are more amorous, honest and less formal. You see this as a good mode of communication. A group of parents/guardians has become concerned about some of the content of the postings, which are “way too familiar, more like student-to-student conversations than school-counselor-to-student.” Are there legal and ethical concerns about your behavior?

Points to Consider

“Professional distance is the space professionals must keep between their professional relationship with another and any other relationship they have with that person” (Crehan, n.d., p.1). This space is necessary for school counselors to be able to fulfill their professional obligations in an impartial way, with a protective boundary between the student and the school counselor.

Spanierman v. Hughes (2008) is an example of the vigilance and judgment educators need to use with social networking. Jeffrey Spanierman, a non-tenured English teacher, was terminated from his position at a high school in Connecticut. Spanierman tried to reach out to his students by creating a MySpace account to encourage communication (Belch, 2012). The school board fired him because Spanierman’s communications with students were “peer-like” conversations that impeded the learning atmosphere. Spanierman filed a lawsuit (*Spanierman v. Hughes*, 576 F. Supp. 2d 292, Dist. Court, D. Connecticut, 2008) but lost in court when it was determined that the destruction of the learning process outweighed the educational value of the MySpace account.

The school counselor/student relationship is naturally an imbalance in power and requires vigilance on the part of the school counselor to avoid exploitation. Professional distance provides a buffer space contributing to the safety of students and school counselors so the possibility of exploitation is lessened. Consequences arise from crossing into the space between personal and professional relationships with minors in mandated settings such as schools. The setting and the relationship between student and school counselor require a high standard of care. School counselors should avoid dual relationships with students that engage students in peer-like conversations.

People say and do things in cyberspace they would not ordinarily do in a face-to-face conversation. This phenomenon is called the disinhibition effect (Suler, 2004). The online environment creates a feeling of invisibility and anonymity. This anonymity amplifies the disinhibition effect, resulting in people dropping their guard and revealing too much about themselves, such as secrets, fears or wishes. The sometimes-asynchronous effect (not interacting in real times, such as e-mail and message boards) seems to contribute to the disinhibition effect. “Immediate, real-time feedback from others tends to have a very powerful effect on the ongoing flow of how much people reveal about themselves” (Suler, 2004, p.2). The appearance of authority is minimized in cyberspace, and the tendency and effect is that people are acting as equals, as in the case of Spanierman, who took on the role of peer and apparently dropped the role of teacher as role model. School counselors who engage in peer-like conversations with students have to ask themselves, “Whose needs are being met? Am I trying to meet my own needs in these familiar peer-like exchanges?”

In another case, Stacey Snyder was terminated for posting a picture on her MySpace account as a “drunken pirate” holding a cup. The federal district court ruled in favor of Snyder’s removal as a public high school intern and stated she was acting in the place of a certified teacher (Michels, 2008). Snyder was not able to complete her internship and, therefore, unable to obtain her teaching certificate (*Snyder v. Millersville* WL 5093140 (ED Pa 2008)).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE INTERNET

Your principal will rarely allow any school counselors out of the building for professional development and never allows both school counselors to leave at the same time. You are keenly aware that a school counselor's standard of care includes staying abreast of developments in the field and continuing to take care of one's professional development. You worry you are not holding yourself to a high standard. Your principal will not relent. How can the Internet help you?

Points to Consider

School counselors are taking advantage of the surge of online professional development opportunities. Through programs such as ASCA SCENE discussion boards, Twitter school counselor chats (#scchat) and a number of blogs, school counselors have an opportunity to communicate with other school counselors to share their ideas (Sampson, 2013).

Many organizations such as ASCA and the American Counseling Association provide school counselors with easily accessible professional development opportunities such as webinars. On the ASCA webinar archive alone they are approximately 150 different webinars addressing various issues in school counseling. The National Association of College Admissions Counselors, the National Office of School Counselor Advocacy of the College Board, state school counseling associations and other education organizations provide quality, free webinars. It is possible to attend a first-rate webinar every week.

When given the opportunity to physically attend workshops, bring back something to share with the principal about how the workshop is going to benefit the school. This will hopefully encourage the principal to allow you to continue to grow your standard of care by attending to your professional development.

STUDENT SAFETY ON THE INTERNET

Serena comes to you worried about her friend Althea, who plans to meet up with a boy she met online. However Serena believes the boy is a man posing as a kid and may harm Althea. What do you do?

Points to Consider

This situation is one of those times when a school counselor will want to talk to the student to impress on her the danger she is putting herself in, and it is highly advisable that with few exceptions the school counselor will immediately alert the students' parents/guardians to possible harm.

Research from Wolak, Mitchell & Finkelhore (2006) suggests that 4 percent of children ages 10–17 are targeted for sex online. One in 33 is aggressively persuaded to meet face-to-face with an online predator, and 34 percent of children are sent unwanted sexually explicit content online. Predators victimize children through sexual abuse or exploitation, cyberbullying or emotional abuse, corruption or violence abuse, and distraction or social abuse

(A Better Child, n.d.). Pedophiles use many outlets on the Internet to target and exploit students, such as blogs, online forums and chat rooms (Penna, Clark & Mohay, 2005).

Burrow-Sanchez, Call, Zheng & Drew (2011) have proposed strategies school counselors can use to help parents/guardians promote Internet safety in their home. School counselors can help parents/guardians improve communication with their children around Internet use and help parents understand how to establish and reinforce Internet-use rules such as keeping the computer in common areas of the house. Additionally, Burrow-Sanchez, et al. (2011) have also suggested Internet safety strategies for school counselors working with students who may be at risk for online victimization.

Facebook has developed an initiative called “Facebook for School Counselors” in alliance with The Internet Keep Safe Coalition (iKeepSafe) and ASCA, available as a free download. Facebook and ASCA provide suggested actions for school counselors (Facebook Education Notes, 2012):

- Helping develop school policies
- Responding to online incidents affecting learning conditions
- Assisting the community in detecting at-risk behavior
- Addressing digital citizenship, technology literacy, privacy, reputation and social awareness

INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING ONLINE

A growing percentage of your students are taking virtual classes for the majority of the week, and you see the need for individual online school counseling. You are putting together a proposal for a grant for online school counseling help. What data will you present to convince funders of the effectiveness of having an online school counseling component?

Points to Consider

There are a number of research results on the benefits and disadvantages of online counseling via e-mail, real-time chat or video conferencing. Distance counseling presents unique ethical dilemmas to professional counselors (The National Board for Certified Counselors, 2016b). A survey conducted by Leibert, Archer, Munson & York (2006) found two major advantages of individual online counseling. Leibert et al. found that individual online counseling is advantageous for students who have dealt with emotional disturbances, social alienation and ridicule from others. These students often feel less anxious while disclosing emotionally oriented information electronically.

Additionally, online services give students a greater sense of autonomy and control (Osborn, 2010). According to Internet-based group interviews, adolescent users felt safer and less emotionally exposed in online counseling as opposed to other forms of counseling (King, Bambling, Lloyd, Gomurra, Smith, Reid & Wegner, 2006). Adolescents are comfortable with real-time audiovisual medium. For counselors working with adolescents, cognitive behavioral therapy is most often used. This approach requires homework rather than tunneling into the patient’s past and seems to lend itself to the real-time video conferencing of counselors

who work online. “Tech-savvy teenagers resistant to office visits might brighten at seeing a therapist through a computer monitor in their bedroom. Home court advantage” (Hoffman, 2011).

Individuals suffering from depression, anxiety and eating disorders can potentially benefit from the therapeutic style of online counseling treatments (Christensen, Griffiths & Jorm, 2004; Leibert et al., 2006). Most online counseling programs are being categorized as “computer-mediated-communication” or to put it simply counselor/clients interaction aided by computers and the Internet (Mallen & Vogel, 2005, p. 762).

A study by Rochlen, Land & Wong suggests that some males find more comfort in online counseling compared with face-to-face counseling (2004). Schultze’s (2006) research study found some students are able to express themselves more freely because of the anonymity online counseling provides. Due to this observation, theorists propose that online counseling has interpersonal components such as anonymity, protection and openness, which promote change in how students relate to school counselors online. Suler’s research found that when the boundaries of communication were blurred it produces an “online disinhibition effect” (2004, p. 321), which decreases defensiveness and self-consciousness, thereby allowing students to disclose information more frequently (Alleman, 2002; Chester & Glass, 2006).

Steele, a school counselor at Stanford University’s Online High School, recognizes a certain degree of anonymity holds true with the barrier of a monitor but believes it is less a factor for the students with whom she works because her online counseling is through video conferencing. “Granted, video conferencing is not in the flesh, but it is in many respects face-to-face because the school counselor and student can see each other through video conferencing real-time platforms. Video conferencing is certainly different from chat rooms, e-mail or instant messaging, and it has proven to be a powerful medium for supporting my students. Counseling students online may seem paradoxical to support students’ social and emotional lives virtually, but many aspects of such support may be easier and more effective within an online educational environment” (Steele, personal communication, March 2017).

In a recent study from Stanford University, researchers analyzed 660,000 text messages from 15,000 crisis counseling sessions that used text chat as the medium of support. Researchers identified several counseling skills associated with successful text sessions, including being able to personalize the discussion, getting to the root of the issue quickly and using words or phrases to steer the conversation in a positive and meaningful direction (Althoff, Clark, & Leskovec, 2016). According to the Pew Research Center, nearly three-quarters of teens have access to a smartphone, and among these teens, 94 percent go online daily or more (Lenhart, April, 2015). These findings complement many of the goals of solution-focused counseling sessions that are effectively practiced in school settings and indicate that text- or chat-based sessions may facilitate this type of counseling practice” (Steele, 2016).

BENEFITS OF ONLINE SCHOOL COUNSELING

You work in the state’s virtual high school. You counsel students on various issues just as your brick-and-mortar colleagues do. What are the cautions and benefits for your work as compared with that of face-to-face school counseling?

Points to Consider

The online environment has distinct qualities that draw students: accessibility, simplicity, convenience, flexibility and inexpensiveness are a few of the benefits. Online counseling may be appealing to students seeking the solace of counseling sessions that don’t require face-to-face interactions or online situations allowing them to express themselves through writing (Shaw & Shaw, 2006). Online counseling is beneficial for students who do not need persistent counseling sessions but may need to be held accountable for improvements they have made (Mallen & Vogel, 2005). Students can also maintain correspondence with school counselors after moving to another state or region (Mallen, Vogel & Rochlen, 2005). Some school counselors have found the availability of text from previous counseling sessions to be beneficial in focusing sessions on particular issues students may have faced (Mallen & Vogel, 2005). School counselors have also found that communicating with students online provides them with more time to respond appropriately to students’ statements, which makes the therapeutic practice more effective (Alleman, 2002).

Do you feel online communication is compatible with your school counseling role?

<i>Extremely compatible</i>	<i>7.4 percent</i>
<i>Very compatible</i>	<i>20.7 percent</i>
<i>Moderately compatible</i>	<i>34.8 percent</i>
<i>Slightly compatible</i>	<i>24.7 percent</i>
<i>Not at all compatible</i>	<i>12.5 percent</i>

(Steele, Stone & Nuckols, 2017)

DISADVANTAGES OF ONLINE SCHOOL COUNSELING

The state’s virtual school is assessing its online school counseling program, and you are in charge of improving the program. What are some disadvantages of online school counseling the state can address?

Points to Consider

The literature speaks to three major problems in online counseling: not all problems are suitable for online counseling, confidentiality in online counseling is impossible to guarantee, students in crisis are sometimes more difficult to help immediately, it is harder to secure referrals for them (Osborn, 2010).

Other disadvantages of online counseling are:

- Student issues and identity (suicidal, depressed)
- Informed consent
- Laws differ across states for confidentiality, privileged

- communication, etc.
- Equality of access
- Technical problems

(Osborn, 2010, p.4)

In an unpublished survey by Steele, Stone and Nuckols (2017) 973 ASCA members reported the following barriers in using online communication. These results do not focus just on individual online school counseling, but there is overlap in the implications.

What barriers do you face in using online communications?

<i>Lack of professional development in the area of online communications</i>	<i>70.3 percent</i>
<i>Lack of time</i>	<i>67.1 percent</i>
<i>Lack of access to online technologies</i>	<i>26.5 percent</i>
<i>Little or no applicability to my role.</i>	<i>23.3 percent</i>
<i>Lack of interest.</i>	<i>24.2 percent</i>

The question has also been raised about whether special training is needed for a practitioner to be able to facilitate a meaningful and viable counseling relationship online (Shaw & Shaw, 2006). Some also find it difficult to communicate warmth, caring, genuineness and openness over the Internet.

In a recent survey by Steele, Stone and Nuckols (2017) ASCA school counselors responded to the level of technology training they have received indicating 44.4 percent have received “extensive” or “quite a bit” of training, 41.9 percent have received “some” training,” and 13.7 percent have received “very little” or no technology training.

Respondents reported in which ways they received technology training.

<i>Attended webinar or sessions provided by the district or ASCA</i>	<i>66.7 percent</i>
<i>Through independent reading, research on ethics and practice</i>	<i>48.3 percent</i>
<i>of counseling online</i>	
<i>Received credentialing/certificate such as from NBCC, NCC</i>	<i>7.8 percent</i>
<i>In a degree or credentialing program</i>	<i>30.7 percent</i>
<i>Participating in blogging, communicating with other school counselors</i>	<i>26.4 percent</i>
<i>on Twitter, Google, Skype, etc.</i>	
<i>Other</i>	<i>13.7 percent</i>

(Steele, Stone & Nuckols, 2017)

From a risk-management perspective, school counselors need to know the true identity and location of their students should an emergency arise (Shaw & Shaw, 2006). It is also important to know the community resources in the student’s local area and to make plans for how to respond to an emergency situation during the informed-consent process at the outset of the professional relationship.

ETHICS OF ONLINE SCHOOL COUNSELING

You are an online school counselor. You have just been thrown into the role as the state just came up with a virtual high school for students. No one has given you guidance in the ethics of online school counseling. Where do you go for help?

Points to Consider

The new modality of online school counseling brings with it previously undiscovered ethical concerns. Online school counseling should be as ethically orientated as any other counseling being offered to [students]/clients (Lee, 1998, p.2). Ethical standards are what separate the counseling occupation from other professions, and professional standards are needed for world of online counseling. Counseling by nature can exploit and create harm or provide tremendous good.

Counseling and social work organizations have been proactive in developing Internet regulations. ASCA, the National Board of Certified Counselors (2016a), the American Counseling Association (ACA; 2014), the National Association for Social Workers (2008), the American Mental Health Counselors Association (2015) and the International Society for Mental Health Online (ISHMO) (2000) have all developed ethical standards for online counseling.

TECHNOLOGY CREATING ENDLESS WORK DAYS

Your district expects you to answer e-mails after school hours. You are concerned about the legal and ethical implications of being available 24 hours a day/seven days a week. Should you be concerned?

Points to Consider

Work/life boundaries can easily be blurred as school counselors use communication methods that serve both their personal and professional lives. Having the Internet in the palm of one's hands with continuous access to e-mail, social media, student information and web resources has the potential of extending the workday long past school hours. Almost half of the respondents (47.5 percent) in the Steele, Stone and Nuckols survey (2017) responded that they check e-mail outside of school hours between "moderate" to a "great deal." Only 5.2 percent of the respondents reported they never check e-mail outside of regular work hours.

There are legal and ethical implications regarding student safety when creating for students, parents and administrators an expectation of being available electronically outside the normal workday. Sixty percent of respondents in the Steele, Stone and Nuckols (2017) study reported they have never received an electronic message after work hours from a student that triggered a safety concern. Of those who did receive such a message, 88 percent responded immediately. Even though the vast majority of school counselors responded immediately, it is of grave concern that there are those who did not as the consequence of the risk is too great.

It is a remote chance but a reality that an argument can be made in a court of law that a legal duty was owed by the school counselor who established a pattern of responding after work, broke that pattern, and an injury or death occurred. Case history tells us it is highly unlikely the school counselor will be found guilty of negligence in a student's suicide, but avoiding the dereliction of duty charge in the first place is best practice by not establishing a 24/7 pattern of availability.

The normal practice for school counselors when a student is suicidal is constant supervision, but outside the workday the school counselor cannot physically supervise a student while awaiting parental or resource help. For the protection of the school counselor and student it is best practice to establish an "away-message" on e-mails clearly communicating available hours and including emergency resources such as a suicide hotline number. Any practice involving the potential of harm needs to be consistently implemented, and since it is unsustainable and unfair to expect a school counselor to be available all hours of the day, the next best thing is to give detailed after-hours resources. Hyper-alertness all hours of the day is the antithesis of downtime, which is necessary for school counselor effectiveness.

STUDENT FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHTS AND CYBERSPACE

Serena, the school newspaper editor, has a blog she runs from home in which she writes freely about the principal's "heavy handedness in controlling what goes into the newspaper." She says what a "narrow-minded bigot" he is and discusses his "homophobic editing of anything to do with gays." She says, "He is a major douche-bag." The principal removes Serena as editor of the school newspaper. Serena sues for violation of her First Amendment rights. Will she prevail?

Points to Consider

Avery Doninger was junior class secretary and in charge of organizing school events. Doninger created and ran a blog from home in which she vented after a less-than-perfect battle of the bands event that the superintendent got "pissed off" and the school administrators were "douchebags." She also used other offensive language to further berate the school employees. The administrators reacted by barring Doninger from applying for senior class secretary. Her mother brought a lawsuit requesting the court implement a preliminary injunction that would allow her daughter to run for senior secretary. Her motion was denied by the District Court and 2nd Circuit Court (*Doninger v. Niehoff*, 527 F.3d 41 (2d Cir. 2008)). After graduating, Avery Doninger became a plaintiff in her own case. She asked for damages from the court claiming her First and 14th Amendment rights were violated. Her case made its way through the court system from the District Court to the 2nd Circuit Court and ended up in the U.S. Supreme Court. The Supreme Court declared her offensive language revoked her First Amendment rights (Hader, 2009).

CYBERSPACE SEARCH AND SEIZURE

The principal is technologically challenged and asks you to go through a student's phone and read the student's text messages aloud. What should be your legal concerns in this situation?

Points to Consider

A reasonable search of a student's possession by school officials occurs when school officials are suspicious of a student's activities and have reason to believe the student has violated school regulations and when a conducted search is directly related to the initial suspicion. The principal is drawing the school counselor into a disciplinary situation that could also be a situation of unreasonable search and seizure. This situation is politically fraught with landmines. To refuse is to appear uncooperative, but to oblige might mean you are now an unwitting party to an illegal search and seizure. As astutely as possible, school counselors will extract themselves from searching the phone's text messages. At the very least the school counselor will want to discuss with the principal the reasons for the search. Are the reasons connected to a strong suspicion the school's code of conduct has been violated, and as the text messages are searched, will school officials only attend to what is directly related to the initial suspicion?

Unreasonable search and seizure has been the topic of many court cases involving school officials. One such case was *Klump v. Nazareth Area School District*. In this case, a teacher confiscated Klump's cell phone when Klump violated school rules and used it in class. The teacher and principal later accessed Klump's personal text messages, voicemails and made phone calls to classmates to inquire about drug activity. A drug-related text message was received while the officials were in possession of the phone. Officials consequently used this information to determine the student had violated the school's drug policy. Klump sued the district, stating his Fourth Amendment rights, which protect against unlawful search and seizure, were violated. The court agreed and ruled in favor of the student, stating the district "had no reason at the onset to suspect that such a search would reveal the [student was] violating another school policy" (*Klump v. Nazareth Area School District*, 425 F. Supp.2d 622 (E.D. Pa., 2006)).

CONFIDENTIALITY OF E-MAIL COMMUNICATION

Teachers in your school routinely send you e-mails with sensitive details about students. Teachers are so busy you hate to burden them by asking them not to contact you about a student via e-mail. You know you have to act, but you want to do so with support for the realities of busy teachers and school counselors while protecting student confidentiality. What is best practice?

Points to Consider

"School counselors should take appropriate and reasonable measures for maintaining confidentiality of student information and educational records stored or transmitted through the use of computers, social media, facsimile machines, telephones, voicemail, answering

machines and other electronic technology” (ASCA, 2016a, A.14.b). E-mail is an accepted form of communication among educators; however, it may not be fully confidential. Maintaining students’ privacy and confidentiality with online communications is a serious concern for school counselor practice and never more so than the common practice of sending or receiving identifying information about students in an e-mail. In the Steele, Stone and Nuckols (2017) study, one in three respondents said they do not include any identifiable information in subject lines or in the body of an e-mail. More than half of the school counselors in our survey reported they make an effort to protect privacy with techniques such as using only initials in the subject line of the e-mail.

School districts are putting policies into place about the use of the school district servers for e-mails. Language is appearing that says no identifying information can be used, such as this one from Philadelphia: “Users shall not reveal personal information to other users on the network, including chat rooms, e-mail, social networking web sites, etc. Personal information includes, but is not limited to, name, e-mail address, home address, telephone number, school address, work address, pictures or video clips” (The School District of Philadelphia).

Also, policies often suggest informing students and parents about the limits of confidentiality in e-mail communications and including this statement as a part of the e-mail signature or footer.

SECURITY OF SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Amy’s divorced parents have been incarcerated at various times. Amy alternately lives in a homeless shelter or her mother’s car. This and other sensitive information is kept in Amy’s electronic educational records. You wonder if there is anything you need to know to support your district’s practice of managing the security of Amy’s and other students’ information?

Points to Consider

As technology evolves, districts need to continue to be proactive and predict and safeguard against possible privacy breaches. School counselors are not responsible for the security of student information management systems, but they can advocate effectively for privacy assurance for Amy and all students.

There are organizations such as iKeepSafe that provide an independent, third-party review of K-12 technology products and websites to determine if they meet state and federal student privacy regulations such as FERPA, the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act, the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. The iKeepSafe organization recently developed the California Student Privacy Assessment, a standard for education technology companies to demonstrate their products comply with federal and state privacy laws. A privacy assessment will likely become the norm for districts, which must reassure the public of their efforts to protect students’ information. It is altogether appropriate for a school counselor who has doubts to question whether or not the district has had a privacy assessment.

In a Position to Know: School Counselors Speak

The cases presented at the beginning of the chapter are revisited here by a counselor educator, an ASCA assistant director and a practicing school counselor in an online setting who are experts in the field of school counseling and technology. Compare their answers with your own approach.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COUNSELING IN A VIRTUAL WORLD

I've just been hired as a school counselor at a virtual high school. How can I meet students' social and emotional needs online?

Online individual and group counseling sessions offer a way to meet students' social/emotional needs in a timely manner irrespective of geographical limitations. Different platforms exist, but generally most have video and audio capabilities allowing multiple users at one time. With video conferencing platforms such as Adobe Connect, schools can offer individual and small-group counseling opportunities wherein students meet remotely with their school counselor and peers, yet are able to see and hear each other to facilitate counseling sessions. For individuals who may feel shy or reticent about getting help, the text chat features are helpful to begin making connections with the school counselor.

Holmes and Kozlowski (2016) studied the challenges inherent in offering these types of opportunities to students. Findings from the study revealed students preferred to use only the chat feature of the online platform, did not come onto the video, and there was a high rate of attrition.

Although online technologies offer opportunity they also offer limitations such as confidentiality and privacy. Most online video and text chat programs automatically keep records of communications, including full transcripts of text chats. Therefore, it is recommended that online school counselors communicate with students and families about their confidentiality policy and the limitations of such a policy in a virtual world.

The ability for a school counselor to respond effectively to students' urgent messages outside of work hours may prove difficult, if not impossible. Therefore, school counselors working with students online should develop protocols for students in urgent need. Providing a school or counseling department webpage with after-hours resources directing students to 24/7 help can be vital for students in need of urgent assistance, particularly in an online school when a student may be operating in a different time zone than the support staff (Steele, Stone & Nuckols, 2017).

As students grow up in this new digital century, the opportunity to provide responsive services in cyberspace will continue to increase, and school counselors will have more opportunities to meet student needs both in person and online.

– Tracy Steele, Ph.D., director of counseling, Stanford Online High School

ELECTRONIC STORAGE OF STUDENT INFORMATION

Alexis, a middle school counselor, has been working diligently to better integrate technology in her work so she can more effectively and efficiently help students. She has found Google Drive to be especially helpful. Are there precautions, uses, and/or advantages to using Google Drive?

Today's computer applications (apps) can help school counselors work more effectively and more enjoyably. Like Google Drive, many productivity and collaboration apps are moving to "the cloud," a remote computer server typically owned by someone who is not you or your school. Cloud computing is the practice of using a network of remote servers to store, manage and process data. Moving from a local server or personal computer to the cloud has many benefits, such as cost, maintenance, convenience and, in some ways, security. At the same time, however, there is more at stake than meets the eye when choosing to use tools such as Google Drive.

Cloud computing raises questions about exactly who can access the data, what hosts, such as Google, can do with your data, and how this might conflict with rules or ethical practices about storing student information. So, how might our abilities to maintain ethical and legal standards be unwittingly compromised by using a given app or technology? There are steps that can be taken to reasonably mitigate any foreseeable risks.

Technological literacy: Technological literacy is the knowledge of when using technology is advisable and efficient in day-to-day counseling situations and when it is not. Technologically literate citizens make informed decisions about which technologies to use in their work, under what conditions, for what purposes and with what potential consequences/impact.

School policies: Another consideration for school counselors is how they may be unknowingly violating their school's technology policies. Here is an example of an acceptable technology-use policy from a school district in North Carolina (2015) that can be easily violated if the user is not versed in such policy:

Before using school system computers or electronic devices or accessing the school network or Internet, students and employees must provide a signed agreement indicating they understand and will strictly comply with the requirements of this policy and any other related rules or procedures established by the superintendent or designee. Students also must provide the signature of a parent or guardian.

Security and privacy: Educational institutions are responsible for maintaining and securing all types of information. Some of the information may be sensitive and highly personal, such as medical or disciplinary data. In the case of using Google Drive or any similar cloud-based productivity/collaboration suite, it is also important to know if your information may be accessed or used for purposes other than helping students. For example, here are some excerpts from Google's privacy policies:

Our automated systems analyze your content (including e-mails) to provide you personally relevant product features, such as customized search results, tailored advertising, and spam and malware detection. ... Google processes personal information on our servers in many countries around the world. We may process your personal information on a server located outside the country where you live. ... after you delete information from our services, we may not immediately delete residual copies from our active servers and may not remove information from our backup systems (see <https://www.google.com/policies/privacy/>).

When protected by two-factor authentication and a strong password, cloud computing services such as Google Drive are reasonably secure. That's not the same as invulnerable; no technology is 100 percent secure. What this does mean is that anyone who wants the data in your account would have to use extraordinary measures to get it.

A simple way to decrease the risk of a personal data security breach is to make certain your anti-malware software is up-to-date and running and you have a strong password. There's a good chance your school-issued laptop, desktop and/or tablet is already running such software and keeping itself updated. However, when using personal devices to access work-related information, it is your responsibility to make sure you are doing the same with antivirus software.

I applaud Alexis for working smarter by integrating technology she has determined will help her to be more effective and efficient in her work. What we don't know in this case is whether she has taken reasonable precautions to protect her students' privacy and honor promised confidentiality. By keeping up with her own technological literacy, practicing "safe computing" and staying up to date on school policies, laws and ethics, Alexis should be able to enhance her productivity and potential positive impact on the lives of students with fidelity, justice and nonmaleficence (Kitchener, 1984).

– Russell A. Sabella, Ph.D., professor, Florida Gulf Coast University

CONFIDENTIALITY IN A VIRTUAL HIGH SCHOOL

The administration is looking to you for suggestions regarding procedures the school counseling department will use for the section of the server where all educators are to keep notes on every student. The notes section is to record summaries of e-mails, phone calls, text messages and face-to-face interactions. The principal explains it is not optional. Every faculty and administrative staff member must use this section so collaboration can happen to optimize each student's education. This means it will be visible to all educators at the school. You are uneasy about the fact that school counseling notes will be there for all educators to see. What will you advocate for when you meet with the principal?

There are limits to confidentiality, and being in a cyber-setting will have an impact on those limits. A school policy requiring you to enter information in a notes section of a database is one limit of confidentiality. Although it may be tricky, I don't think the policy creates an unworkable situation. You can think of these notes in the same way as when, in a brick-and-mortar school, a school counselor sends a request to a teacher to send a student to his

or her office or when a school counselor writes an excuse slip when a student returns to class. It is also common for school counselors to follow up with teachers, administrators or parents/guardians about a student concern after holding an individual counseling session with the student, so some information is naturally shared without breaching confidentiality when collaborating with other staff or parents/guardians. School staff members have a need to know some information but definitely not all information. On the positive side, the notes section of the database may be an effective way to communicate and collaborate with teachers, especially at an online school.

Advocate for a system where teachers and administrators can only see notes on students who are assigned to them. Also, advocate for school counselors to be allowed to keep generic notes in the notes section to avoid creating a major limit on confidentiality. Your notes could include dates and times you met with the student, contacted the parent or consulted with a teacher. Your notes could also include generic information such as academic discussion, college and career readiness, social/emotional issue, etc. These notes would be equivalent to what you might say to a parent who questions why you are meeting with his or her child if you were working in a brick-and-mortar school.

Once information is entered into the database, it becomes a part of the education record and will be included with the record if it is subpoenaed in a court proceeding. You will want to write any notes in a manner in which you would feel comfortable if that situation were to occur. You could then create more detailed personal case notes that are not a part of the education record based on FERPA.

It is critical in this situation to make sure students understand the limits of confidentiality. Be sure to include information about your school's policy in your informed consent so students can make a decision about how much information they are comfortable disclosing. Inform students of your school's policy on this issue. After a particularly sensitive discussion, you could discuss with the student what information you would like to include in the notes section of the database and obtain the student's consent before entering it.

A school policy requiring school counselors to keep notes in the notes section of a school-wide database may be tricky, but if you work with your administrators to help them clearly understand confidentiality and agree ahead of time as to what information will be included in the notes, you can turn this requirement into a workable situation that will help you collaborate for student success with others staff members.

– *Eric Sparks, Ed.D. assistant director, ASCA, and former school counseling supervisor, Wake County Public Schools, N.C.*

ONLINE COUNSELING AND SUICIDAL IDEATION

Seth, one of your students in your online high school, has been in a tailspin academically and emotionally since his mother died a year ago. His electronic conversations about death were forwarded to you by a concerned friend. Seth's father feels his son is being overly dramatic and does not believe Seth would ever harm himself. Then, in a panicked call to you, Seth describes using his father's gun or pills and ending it all.

You keep Seth on the phone while you try to get his father on another line, but Seth informs you his father's cell phone is ringing right next to him as his father forgot to take it with him. He says he must go, and hangs up the phone with you abruptly. What do you do?

The main concern in this case involves Seth's safety. Given that the school counselor has evidence Seth has discussed his desire to stop living in prior online chats and that he mentioned to the school counselor on the phone that he may use his father's gun or pills to end it all, it is reasonable to suspect Seth may proceed to attempt suicide. Therefore, in addition to providing immediate counseling to Seth, the school counselor has a legal and ethical obligation to call Seth's father. However, because Seth's father is unreachable and Seth is not sitting in a school office where he can be supervised to remain safe from harm, the online school counselor will need to take additional steps to ensure Seth's safety.

The school counselor may decide to look up emergency contact numbers for Seth and work to get in contact with a relative or family friend who might be able to care for Seth until his father is reached. If this approach fails and the school counselor cannot connect with an emergency contact, the school counselor can choose to call the police in Seth's area to conduct a welfare check. When talking to the police, the online school counselor should let them know he or she fears the student is suicidal, and the father is unreachable. Often, the police may bring a social worker or psychologist to the house to perform an assessment of the individual's psychological condition. In this case, the police, and possibly a social worker or therapist, can determine whether Seth may be such a threat to himself that he requires hospitalization.

It will also be important to encourage the father to seek professional help for Seth and help him get referrals to community agencies in the area. Seth's father should be educated about suicide risk in teens, and he should be strongly encouraged to seek professional help. At the end of the day, if the school counselor believes the father may be contributing to Seth's situation by refusing to get Seth professional help, the school counselor may do well to consult with Child Protective Services in the area where Seth lives. School counselors can contact The Childhelp National Abuse Hotline, which is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with professional crisis counselors who have access to a database of 55,000 emergency, social service and support resources.

– Tracy Steele, Ph.D., director of counseling, Stanford Online High School;
and Chloe Benjamin, school counselor, Stanford Online High School

Making Connections

1. During your classroom lessons you usually take your students to the computer lab to assist them in researching prospective colleges and career options. Describe the websites you will have them research and why you have chosen these sites.

2. You are a school counselor at an urban school where few students have access to the Internet or computers at home. How do you assist students in accessing the information they need for future goals and plans?
3. Explain how ASCA and ACA address school counselors' use of technology.
4. The creative writing teacher wants to create a blog where students can share their opinions of books they read throughout the semester. She is apprehensive about using the Internet to communicate with students because of the many cases she has heard of where teachers have lost their jobs for inappropriate discussions with students. She has come to you for advice. What advice will you give her?
5. Discuss the ethical standards of online counseling.

Chapter 3 Quiz

- 1) A privacy assessment regarding student information management systems means:
 - a. School districts are keeping some notes in educational records and putting some in locked file cabinets
 - b. Educational records are to be kept in paper copy only
 - c. Everyone who looks at educational records must do so only during school hours
 - d. A standard for technology companies to demonstrate their products comply with federal and state privacy laws
 - e. Only school counselors can see case notes
- 2) *Spanierman v. Hughes* (2008) is an example of:
 - a. How critical it is not to engage in any social media
 - b. The vigilance and judgment educators need to use when using social networking with students
 - c. The false sense of security that comes when school counselors think students are paying attention to the critical, timely information they are putting on social media
 - d. The reason school counselors need to keep abreast of technology and use it daily in their practice
 - e. How easy it is to breach confidentiality while using social media
- 3) Online counseling is:
 - a. To be avoided and never used
 - b. Condemned by the American School Counselor Association
 - c. A valid much-needed alternative for some students
 - d. Dangerous
 - e. Preferred over face-to-face counseling
- 4) Checking e-mail during off school hours is:
 - a. Proactive
 - b. Okay as long as you still give yourself time for rest and relaxation
 - c. A great way to reduce your workload during the workweek

- d. Establishing a pattern of behavior that cannot and should not be sustained
- e. Is required if parents are to appreciate school counselors' spirit of above-and-beyond

5) Students' cyber behavior:

- a. Is a First Amendment right that can never be disciplined by school officials
- b. Can only be disciplined if they sent the message during school hours
- c. Can only be disciplined if they used a school computer to send the message
- d. Can be disciplined if the post causes a substantial disruption to the educational process
- e. Has been the subject of numerous U.S. Supreme Court cases

Key Terms

ASCA SCENE

Blogs

Cross-tabulate data

Cyberspace

Data warehousing

Digital footprint

Disinhibition effect

Facebook

Technologically literate

Twitter

Video conferencing

Virtual

Webinar