



Response/Action Required

September 13, 2024

To: All Building Administrators & School Counselors
From: Dave Peters, Director of Student Support Services
Regarding: **Mental Health Therapists in Schools**

Occasionally, requests are made for counselors/therapists from outside agencies to meet with students at school during the school day in an unsupervised setting. These arrangements can be permitted if each of the following considerations are in place in advance:

1. Prior to non-EPS counseling sessions with students in an *unsupervised* setting at school during the school day – in person or virtually – an MOU must be signed between the agency/counselor and the school district.
 - a. Click to access the most up-to-date [approved agency MOU list](#).
2. A confidential meeting space must be available, and the school principal (or designee) must give approval.
3. Meeting with the student outside the school day would be prohibitive based on safety, or due to access barriers including (but not limited to) transportation, parent/guardian work schedules, or therapist appointment availability.

Q: Why does an MOU have to be signed in order for a certified mental health therapist to meet 1:1 with our students? Can't we assume this level of trust based on their credentials alone?

A: State law ([RCW 28A.400.303](#)) requires that we ensure a Washington state patrol and national criminal background check prior to allowing *unsupervised* access to children at school. The MOU includes this confirmation by the agencies of the therapists who work with our kids.

Q: What should we do if a therapist shows up at our school to meet with a student, but they're from an agency not listed on the [approved agency MOU list](#)?

A: Inform them that they are not allowed to meet with students in an unsupervised setting at school unless their agency has signed an MOU with the school district. Then contact [Dave Peters](#) (x4063) to initiate the approval process between the district and that agency.

Q: Can't an outside agency therapist meet with a student 1:1 at school if the parents have given their permission?

A: Only if the agency has signed an MOU with the school district.

Q: Are staff from a WISE program approved to meet 1:1 with our students?

A: It depends. [WISE](#) (Wraparound with Intensive Services) is an approach rather than an agency. If someone identifies themselves from "WISE," ask them to show you identification from the actual agency they work under. Then check the [approved agency MOU list](#).

Required Action:

Share this information with your front office staff and counselor(s).

Approved for Distribution _____

Peter Scott