

Frequently Asked Questions

What does a social worker do in a school setting?

School Social Workers are trained mental health professionals who provide services related to a person's social and emotional adjustment in school. They can assist with behavioral concerns and academic issues as well as provide suggestions for classroom and home supports. This can be done through consultation with teachers, parents, and administrators as well as individual and group counseling.

How do I know if my child should see a social worker?

There are many reasons you might want your child to see a social worker. Some of the reasons people commonly seek help include problems with friends, anxiety, depression, high stress levels, self-injury and trauma. If your child is struggling with an issue and they need someone to talk to or assistance addressing the concern, seeing a school social worker may help.

What does counseling look like in a school setting?

Counseling at school can take several forms. Students may be seen individually or in a small group. During these sessions, students may play games, participate in activities or have conversations to help them learn the skills they need to address whatever concern brought them to social work. A student may be seen weekly, bi-weekly or monthly and these sessions can vary in time from a quick drop-in to a 40 minute session. Duration of services can range from a few sessions to the entire school year depending on why the student is being seen.

Will my child's counseling session be confidential?

Basically, whatever you say in social work, stays in social work. However, there are times when a social worker is legally obligated to break confidentiality. This includes any safety concerns such as harm to self or others and suspected child abuse. If a social worker believes that someone is in danger, they will notify the proper authorities. This may include parents, administrators, police, child and family services or 911.

Can a school social worker diagnose a mental health concern for my child?

No. A diagnosis needs to occur with a therapist or doctor outside of a school setting. However, school social workers are willing to assist in gathering information to assist with the diagnosis. This can include behavior logs, assessments and observations. School social workers are also able to consult with outside agencies to assist with continuity of care.

If I am concerned that my child needs more support than what can be provided at school, where can I go for additional assistance?

The district social workers have put together a list of resources that are available in DeKalb County and the surrounding area. A copy of that list is located [HERE](#). Your child's physician may also be able to provide you with support and assistance.

Where should I go for assistance if I'm concerned about an immediate threat of harm occurring to my child?

When a child is talking about suicide, it can be very scary and overwhelming. During a situation such as this, it is important to remember that you are not alone and there are many different places that you can go for assistance. Several agencies in the area offer risk assessments which are generally performed to determine the level of threat and can help determine the appropriate next steps. These agencies are Ben Gordon Center (815-756-4875) and Youth Service Bureau (815-748-2010). There are also two hotlines that can be used to seek assistance. These are the Crisis Line (866-242-0111) and the 24 hour suicide hotline (800-273-8255). Remember that in the event of an emergency, you should always call 911 for immediate assistance.

What is social-emotional learning?

Social-emotional learning (SEL) enables children to form and maintain healthy relationships with others, work collaboratively to solve problems and regulate their behavior and emotions. Children with strong SEL competencies perform better in school because they are able to focus on lessons and work collaboratively with peers and their teachers to facilitate learning.

With all of the changes from the Pandemic, will my child's social emotional learning skills be impacted?

Social and emotional learning (SEL) has been viewed as important and has been taking place in schools for many years; however, the pandemic has emphasized this importance. As the pandemic unfolded, we saw how important skills like empathy, resilience and the ability to cope with anxiety are in handling the daily pressures that have come with the pandemic. For some of our students, situations surrounding the Pandemic may have impacted their social and emotional learning. There are many factors that can be looked at to determine the extent of the impact and the best way to address those concerns.

Are there things I can be doing at home to help support my child's social emotional growth?

Nurture your child's self-esteem. A child with a good sense of self is happier, more well-adjusted and does better in school. Strategies for fostering self-esteem include giving your child responsibilities, allowing them to make age-appropriate choices and showing your appreciation for a job well done.

Respect differences. Every child has his or her own unique talents and abilities. Whether in academics, athletics or interpersonal relationships, resist the urge to compare your child to friends or siblings. Instead, honor your child's accomplishments and provide support and encouragement for the inevitable challenges they face.

Provide structure and routines. Establish predictable routines for your child. Knowing what to expect can help to manage stress and anxiety in an otherwise unpredictable time.

Establish check-ins. Set up times during the day for reflection. Encourage your child to discuss how they are feeling and what they are experiencing.

Practice self-care. Don't forget your own needs! Children learn from example. Practicing self-care is important during this stressful time. Looking after your own physical and mental health will allow you to better help yourself and your child.