

STUDENT & FAMILY COUNSELLOR

Referral Criteria For students who are blind or visually impaired

Role of the APSEA Student & Family Counsellor

- Works with Itinerant teachers to help them address the social skills component of the Expanded Core Curriculum. This could include recommendations for social skills goals, suggestions for intervention strategies, observations of the student, or individual instruction.
- Works with families to help them develop parenting skills, coping skills, and address issues of loss and grief.
- Collaborates with school districts, school teams, guidance counsellors and other agencies to establish the necessary support to help children who are blind or visually impaired function at home and school.
- Delivers short-term placements on social topics at the APSEA centre in Halifax.
- Provides individual and group counselling to students who are attending the APSEA centre in Halifax.
- Facilitates referrals to community agencies such as Mental Health. The Student and Family Counsellor may also act as a consultant to a local counsellor who is seeing a student or parents.

Criteria for referral to the APSEA Student & Family Counsellor

- APSEA Itinerant teachers are responsible for making referrals to receive services from the Student and Family Counsellor. However, parents, students, and school teams can access the Student and Family Counsellor via the Itinerant teacher who completes the referral form and forwards it to their provincial supervisor.
- The student's Itinerant teacher is responsible for obtaining informed consent from the parents or guardians for counselling service.
- APSEA teachers are welcome to contact the APSEA Student and Family Counsellor for advice on any issue or to discuss whether to refer for counselling service.
- Referrals for counselling service should be related to the student's blindness or visual impairment.
- The APSEA Student and Family Counsellor may discontinue counselling service when parents or students are uncooperative, or when the goals of counselling can be better met by another agency, guidance counsellor, or APSEA staff member.

Reasons parents are apt to be referred to the APSEA Student & Family Counsellor

- To discuss and learn behaviour management strategies that are appropriate for their child who is blind or visually impaired.
- To gain an understanding of the grieving process and work through their feelings as they relate to their child's disability.
- To learn or develop advocacy skills for their child.
- To help parents learn how to seek support for themselves through the APSEA Parent Group,

- becoming acquainted with other parents who have a child who is blind or visually impaired, or participating in parenting skills programs.
- To learn or discuss ways to ensure integration of their child into the family. This could include facilitating family discussions or problem solving.
 - To help parents deal with issues of adolescence such as safety, dating, driver's license, independence, etc.
 - To provide information and encourage parents to consider appropriate programs or services for their child such as short-term placements, camps, extra-curricular activities, and community groups.

Reasons students may be referred to the APSEA Student & Family Counsellor

- To address issues related to accepting blindness or vision loss such as the acceptance of braille or white cane use.
- To learn self-advocacy and assertiveness in relation to their blindness or visual impairment. For example, learning to advocate for large print materials, or informing the teacher when they cannot see something.
- To develop social skills that will enhance their ability to be socially accepted by their peers and reduce isolation.
- To address issues that emerge during adolescence. This could include frustration about not being able to get a driver's licence, uncertainty about flirting or dating behaviour, puberty and sexuality, career plans, etc.
- To address issues of self-concept and low self-esteem as they relate to their vision loss.

For further information, please contact:

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