

► **COUNSELING TEAM**

- There are people in each school building that students and their families can connect with for mental health support.
- Each elementary school has a school counselor, a school psychologist, and a Family School Liaison.
  - Each middle school has two school counselors, a school psychologist, a Family School Liaison, and a Student Assistance Counselor.
  - F-M High School has seven school counselors, a school psychologist, a Family School Liaison, and a Student Assistance Counselor. .
  - There is one district psychologist that supports all schools.

Each member of the counseling team has an important impact on the emotional health and well-being of students. There is some overlap in services and some distinctions as well. Regardless of titles, counseling staff members work as a team, regularly collaborating to support students and families.

► **WHO TO CONTACT**

Any student who needs mental health support, or a family member concerned about their student, should reach out first to the student’s designated school counselor, whose contact information may be found on the district website. The school counselor will determine what supports are necessary and either help the student directly or refer them to another counseling staff member or an outside resource that could meet the identified needs.

► **COUNSELING STAFF CONTACTS**

- |   |   |
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| 📌 <b>Enders Road Elementary School</b><br>315-692-1501  | 📌 <b>Eagle Hill Middle School</b><br>315-692-1401         |
| 📌 <b>Fayetteville Elementary School</b><br>315-692-1601 | 📌 <b>Wellwood Middle School</b><br>315-692-1301           |
| 📌 <b>Mott Road Elementary School</b><br>315-692-1701    | 📌 <b>Fayetteville-Manlius High School</b><br>315-692-1801 |

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Counseling staff members participate in a variety of mental health training. Some examples of topics covered include:

- ✓ Anxiety and stress management
- ✓ Suicide and self-harm
- ✓ Coping with grief and loss
- ✓ Identity and gender expression (LGBTQIA+)
- ✓ Understanding and managing emotions
- ✓ Common mental illness among children and adolescents
- ✓ Eating disorders
- ✓ Strengthening relationships
- ✓ Substance use and abuse
- ✓ Impact of divorce on students and families



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Supporting students’ mental health is what our counseling staff members do all day, every day. Regardless of the issue a student is dealing with, emotion is involved. Whether a kindergartener is arriving at school for the first time or a high school student is trying to figure out what life looks like after graduation, each experience carries a variety of emotions. Helping students recognize their feelings and learn how to manage them is the foundation of our counseling team’s work.

*Produced in cooperation with the Capital Region BOCES Communications Service, December 2023.*



**Supporting Students' Mental Health**

- **EDUCATION**
- **CONNECTIONS**
- **RESPONSIVE SERVICES**

[www.fmschools.org](http://www.fmschools.org)





There has been a national conversation about students’ mental health, and Fayetteville-Manlius School District students are facing many of the same challenges as their peers from across the country.

The district continues to bolster the number of initiatives in place to support the emotional health and wellness of all F-M school community members.

This brochure is designed to give you a snapshot of our counseling team’s roles and activities. While our team members have a variety of responsibilities, they all support the emotional health and well-being of our students and staff in three primary ways: educating, making connections, and providing responsive services.

The counseling team is committed to the district’s vision of promoting all students’ personal success, which includes their emotional health. During this school year, we will be sharing more information on our website and with you directly around emotional health and wellness and the resources available to you and your family.



## EDUCATION

Educating students about their mental health is important so they can effectively express and manage their emotions in ways that support their overall well-being. Students should also be able to identify when and how to seek help.

### ACTIVITIES THAT PROMOTE AWARENESS

- **District Mental Health Educator, William DeSantis, is participating in the inaugural School Crisis Recovery Renewal Project Fellowship.** DeSantis is one of 25 crisis leaders from across the country who will collaborate on a capstone project focusing on helping communities heal from trauma.
- High school counseling staff partner with health and physical education teachers to teach students about emotional wellness, suicide prevention and managing stress and anxiety.
- Middle school counseling staff talk with students about such topics as practicing positive decision-making, identifying and using coping skills and creating healthy relationships. They teach lessons on self-awareness, communication skills, mental health, anxiety, depression and suicide awareness.
- Elementary classroom lessons focus on teaching skills for learning, empathy, emotion regulation and problem solving.
- High school students have participated in suicide awareness programs provided by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.
- During parent/guardian nights and orientation programs, counseling staff encourage students and families to define success in their own way and strive for a healthy life balance.
- Parent programs have been offered that focus on such topics as anxiety, depression, suicide prevention, eating disorders, and substance abuse.
- Counseling staff in each school help coordinate and lead Wellness Day activities that focus on relieving and managing student stress.



## CONNECTIONS

Building connections between students and their school is important so they feel comfortable and safe. There is a direct relationship between a student’s feelings of physical and emotional safety and their ability to learn and thrive.

### STRATEGIES THAT FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS

- **New in the 2023-24 school year,** one Promise Zone specialist will be stationed in each elementary school building to support students with emotional or behavioral challenges. They will focus on collaborative problem solving, in-class support, and de-escalation.
- **New in the 2023-24 school year,** two Student Assistance Counselors will serve the middle and high school buildings to help offer students social and emotional support, and improve access to substance abuse prevention, treatment, and recovery services.

- **New in the 2023-24 school year,** Mental Health Clinics provided by ARISE will be available at the high school and middle schools to reduce travel time for students who receive therapeutic support outside of school. The district will provide space for these clinics, but clinicians will bill families' insurance plans.
- Counseling staff host orientation programs for students and their families when students transition to kindergarten, middle school and high school.
- Counselors introduce themselves in classrooms, small groups or individually so students know who they are, how they can help and how to contact them.
- Family-school liaisons work directly with families to create a positive, supportive relationship between home and school. They frequently connect families to outside agencies and organizations.
- There are 12 therapy dogs working to greet students in the morning, visit classrooms and spend time with students who are having a difficult day.
- School counselors frequently advise student clubs, coach athletic teams, chaperone field trips and attend school events and activities so they can engage with students and their families beyond the school day.



## RESPONSIVE SERVICES

It is important to identify and respond to students’ mental health needs so they feel supported as they meet challenges that arise in and out of school.

### ACTIONS THAT SUPPORT WELL-BEING

- **The new Mental Health Task Force has started its work in the 2023-24 school year.** The task force will be facilitated by Dr. Melissa Carman, the CEO/Founder of CNY Mental Health Counseling, PLLC, and Dr. Cory Wallack, the Counseling Center Director at Syracuse University.
- The district piloted a student School Culture and Climate Survey with a third-party to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. **For the 2023-24 school year, the district plans to administer the survey to staff, students, and their families.**
- Counseling team members at all levels serve as the “first responders.” They listen non-judgmentally, assess the situation, consider signs, symptoms and risk factors, give reassurance, share information/resources, encourage self-care, consult with parents, teachers, administrators and provide referrals to outside professionals.
- A 20-minute Wellness Break is included in every high school student’s schedule. Students report that they use the time to eat, relax, check their phones, study, begin homework, and catch up with their friends.
- At the elementary and middle schools, counselors hold support groups for students during lunch periods so there is no impact to students’ academic schedules. The groups focus on such topics as stress management, identifying feelings, how to be a friend, self-esteem building and coping with divorce.
- The district has implemented the BIMAS-2 to assess student well-being. Based on results, students are provided varied levels and intensity of support, such as individual or group meetings, referrals to outside therapists and/or enrollment in mentoring programs.