



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**May 4, 2020**

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## **NCSS School Based Supports during COVID-19**

By Lance Metayer, Matt Habedank, Michael Bombard, and Christie Moffett, NCSS Children, Youth & Family Services division

Our community is experiencing an unprecedented situation. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, education, Northwestern Counseling & Support Services (NCSS), and community partners have come together to ensure that children and families are still receiving the highest quality of care. In the midst of the uncertainty and increased stress NCSS has closely partnered with schools to ensure that students and families receive the support necessary to access their education and sustain progress towards the social and emotional goals that are a key part of our role. To ensure that this happens our NCSS staff have been striving to meet client and community need by providing clinical consultation to educators, developing social/emotional learning work for clients and teachers, assisting with meal preparation and delivery, and providing essential worker daycare within schools. "NCSS' role is to respond to the needs of Franklin and Grand Isle County schools during this time, we have had to remain continually flexible and develop creative solutions as the situation and client needs can change from day to day", noted, Danielle Lindley, Director of the Children, Youth & Family Services division.

As a way to continue to meet the needs of our clients we are working with children and families remotely via phone and video conferencing as well as other electronic communication tools. NCSS school based staff have been continually innovative in the ways they are engaging clients via technology which has involved: cooking classes, therapeutic art activities, one on one interaction, self-care groups, family therapy sessions, and the sharing of media. The focus of this work is the same as when it is provided in the school setting, although the hours maybe somewhat variable and the way we are engaging clients has changed, our clients are continuing to grow from the support we are providing.

At the Soar Learning Center, an alternative education and day treatment program, educators have moved to an on-line remote learning model including live high school classes. Clinical staff, educators, and service coordinators are providing daily outreach to families and students to provide clinical and behavioral supports to ensure that both academic and social emotional learning continues for all students.

While service delivery may look different following social distancing guidelines, NCSS has adapted its services to continue to meet the needs of the community. This means tailoring services to current clients to meet increased stressors families are experiencing due to COVID-19 and also continuing to accept new clients who may need extra support during these times. NCSS' 24/7 crisis services remain available to all Franklin and Grand Isle County

residents and can be accessed by calling 524-6554 and press 1. Anyone who is currently served by NCSS can access support by reaching out directly to the staff you work with, or by calling the main agency number at 524-6555.

As NCSS moves forward during this crisis, the goal continues to be returning to serving clients face to face as soon as it is safe to do so. Until that time, there are instances where immediate safety concerns outweigh the need to provide remote supports, and in those moments NCSS remains ready to deliver whatever service is necessary to help maintain the well-being of our clients and their families. Aside from these rare situations, for the safety of our clients, staff and our community NCSS will continue to provide services following social distancing guidelines as determined by Governor Scott. "This period of time has reinforced how much our staff cares about our clients and our community. We are excited to begin to provide face to face services in homes, schools and the community once again when it is safe to do so", stated, Danielle Lindley, Director of the Children, Youth & Family Services division.

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