# Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Direct Counseling Services and Program Planning in accordance with [§ 22.1-291.1:1. School counselors; staff time](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter15/section22.1-291.1%3A1/)

The 2023 General Assembly approved [Senate Bill 1043](https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?231+sum+SB1043&231+sum+SB1043), which incorporates consistent statewide definitions and expectations for licensed professional school counselors for the provision of “*direct counseling services*” and “*program planning and school support*.” This legislation further defines the role of the school counselor that was established through legislation from[House Bill 1729](http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?191+ful+CHAP0139) in the 2019 General Assembly, which amended requirements for the allocation of school counselor staff time.

[**§ 22.1-291.1:1*. School counselors; staff time***](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter15/section22.1-291.1%3A1/)**­­**

*“Each school counselor employed by a school board in a public elementary or secondary school shall spend at least 80 percent of his staff time during normal school hours in the direct counseling of individual students or groups of students and may spend up to 20 percent of his staff time during normal school hours on program planning and school support.”*

School counseling services are broken down into two categories; Direct Counseling Services, which shall require at least 80 percent of a school counselor’s time; and Program Planning and School Support, which may encompass 20 percent of a school counselor’s time.

## Direct Counseling Services

"Direct counseling" means school counseling curriculum lessons and activities, individual counseling, small group counseling, crisis counseling, appraisal and advisement, consultation, collaboration, and referrals. "Direct counseling" does not include program planning and school support.

§ 22.1.-291.1:1 requires that **direct counseling make up at least 80 percent** of a school counselor’s time, during normal school hours. § 22.1.-291.1:1 identifies the following activities as “direct counseling.”

* **School counseling curriculum lessons and activities:** the act of providing data-informed lessons or activities at the classroom level or on a schoolwide basis to provide students with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills appropriate for their developmental levels.
* **Small group counseling:** the act of providing counseling to small groups of students with similar developmental or situational challenges with the goal of improving achievement, attendance, mental health or wellness, or behavioral outcomes.
* **Individual counseling**: the act of providing developmentally appropriate, goal-focused, and brief counseling sessions to individual students to address issues relating to mental health and wellness, social and emotional development, academic achievement, and college and career readiness.
* **Appraisal and advisement**: the act of assisting students in exploring their abilities, interests, skills, and achievement to make decisions and develop immediate and long-range goals and plans.
* **Consultation, collaboration, and referrals**: the act of (i) providing information to and receiving information from individuals or teams to support a student's needs; (ii) working and communicating with parents, teachers, administrators, other school staff, and community stakeholders to (a) promote achievement for a specific student or (b) promote systemic change to address the needs of groups of underserved or underrepresented groups of students; and (iii) referring students to outside providers and resources as necessary.
* **Crisis counseling**: the act of providing counseling to individual students or small groups of students to help such students navigate critical situations such as emergencies and crises.

## Program Planning and School Support

§ 22.1.-291.1:1 requires that **program planning and school support services may make up 20 percent** of a school counselor’s time, during normal school hours. § 22.1.-291.1:1 defines program planning and school support as the following:

**Program planning and school support:** the act of defining, planning, managing, and assessing school counseling activities. Program planning and school support include the act of:

* Reviewing data;
* Creating annual student outcome goals;
* Creating action plans and results reports;
* Holding annual administrative conferences;
* Monitoring use-of-time;
* Creating annual and weekly calendars; and
* Facilitating school counseling advisory councils.