

Q&A to Russ Sabella regarding School Counseling software options:

Q: Diane writes, "Hi Russ, I would be interested in knowing more about various programs for keeping notes on students; also the wisdom of doing so. I know there are lots of things available, but I need something reasonably priced and that I could "lock."

A: Good question Diane. I appreciate your interest in using high-tech tools to maintain and use data in a confidential manner.

One way to take notes is to use your personal information manager. For example, with Microsoft Outlook Calendar, you can log your appointments and use the Notes section to take your notes. You can check the Privacy box in the lower right corner so that it doesn't show up on a network. And, you can add another layer of security by encrypting the notes (click on File, Properties, then the Security Tab). This is, by today's standards, an awkward and not-so-high-tech way of doing it I have to admit. I mention it though because many counselors are already using Outlook so no further purchase of software would be necessary.

A better way of doing it is to purchase software which is specifically designed for this purpose. For instance, one popular system is the School Counselor Accountability and Task Analysis Program (SCAATAP; <http://www.scaatap.com>). SCAATAP provides school counselors a quick and easy way to record activities and create daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual reports. The data generated by these reports will provide the "process" accountability that administrators and policy-makers desire. The reports will help answer the question "What do school counselors do?" You can visit the SCAATAP site and download a trial version to "kick the tires" a bit before you decide to purchase.

Another piece of software named Hallways is available at <http://www.ihatepaperwork.com>. You can take a tour of this beginning at <http://www.ihatepaperwork.com/Hallways/tour/students.htm>

The nice thing about both of these tools is that they align with the ASCA National Model and Standards (<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=134>) and can help you throughout various aspects of your comprehensive school counseling program.

Another tool worth mentioning and that some school counselors are using is treatment planning software. For instance, TheraScribe® 4.0 simplifies and streamlines clinical record-keeping and eliminates hours of time-consuming paperwork. TheraScribe® even gives you the flexibility to customize your treatment plans—simply "point and click" to add behavioral definitions, treatment goals and objectives, and therapeutic interventions. <http://www.wiley.com/legacy/products/subject/psychology/therascribe>. I believe that this type of software can work for counseling and development goals in all the domains: academic, personal/social, and career.