As leaders within the school setting, school counselors impact students, guardians, and faculty/staff. In light of COVID-19, school counselors are facing novel situations which challenge traditional approaches and require innovative ideas. Counselors must be prepared to respond to stakeholder needs while at a distance and when in-person classes are back in session.

Suggestions to provide support from a distance:
• Establish a Google voice number so families can reach you via voice or text; be sure to set boundaries and expectations on working hours
• Conduct virtual student check-ins, especially for students who need additional support; document parent permission
• Develop short videos to share with students and parents
• Utilize electronic resources such as Nearpod, Class Dojo, FlipGrid, and Canvas to engage students and families
• Hold virtual office hours periodically via Zoom or similar method
• Create (or update) a comprehensive counseling department website to house all resources, videos, and links to community supports
• Periodically send out brief encouragers to administrators, faculty, & staff
• Intermittently send self-care tips to administrators, faculty, & staff

Considerations when returning to school:
• As much as possible, rearrange your classroom/office to allow for safe distancing
• Be prepared to respond to students who have lost loved ones due to COVID-19; collect grief resources in anticipation of this need
• Understand that many students may be negatively impacted by the abrupt end of the previous school year—be ready to help them readjust to the school setting
• Anticipate anxiety from students, parents, and faculty/staff; collect resources in advance to share as needed
• Prepare lessons and/or presentations to address coping strategies
• Continue to provide an alternate means for meeting with parents (i.e. phone calls or Zoom meetings) and sharing resources (i.e. comprehensive websites, routine newsletters, webinars, etc.)

Reference
• National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement: COVID-19 Pandemic Resources
• American Counseling Association: School Counseling During a Pandemic
• Anxiety Canada: Educator Resources