



TCHATT FAQs School Counselors:

This packet is designed to help streamline your TCHATT conversations and referrals as you work with parents/guardians, students, and your local TCHATT team.

We have included information on:



Eligibility & Basics

Who TCHATT is designed for, including student ages, needs/symptoms, and more



Benefits of TCHATT

how virtual mental health care helps students



Scheduling & Location

Appointment hours, location, and scheduling



Roles & Participation

Expectations and requirements for parents/guardians, students, the school counselor/liaison, and TCHATT staff



Counselor Tool:

How to Explain TCHATT to Parents and Guardians (sample language)



Counselor Tool:

Referral Process Checklist

The TCHATT program is offered by the Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium. For more information, visit **tcmhcc.utsystem.edu/tchatt**, or email us at **tcmhcc@utsystem.edu**.

Our team is always around to address any questions or concerns you may have. Please note that operations may vary across the state.



If you don't know if your school district is part of TCHATT, see our website **tcmhcc.utsystem.edu/tchatt** or contact a school administrator

Eligibility & Basics



What is TCHAT and who can use it?

TCHAT stands for Texas Child Health Access Through Telemedicine. The program offers mental health support and care to students.

- >> Free and no insurance needed.
- >> For students in pre-K to 12th grade.
- >> Virtual care for easy access.
- >> Statewide, coordinated through Texas schools and school districts.
- >> Licensed, local mental health clinicians anchored in 12 Texas medical schools.
- >> Majority of appointments occur within school environment to limit time away from class/school.
- >> In over 6,000 campuses and around 70% of Texas school districts, available to over 4 million students.

Students must have a quiet, private location for TCHAT services and a device with internet access (a computer or smartphone).

Does TCHAT share student information with the school or district?

Privacy matters. TCHAT is a confidential program separate from the school or district. What a student or parent/guardian shares in a TCHAT session is confidential. It is up to a parent/guardian if they'd like to sign a release to share more details with you or the school. Exceptions to confidentiality include concerns for safety or abuse.

How long does TCHAT see a student?

It depends. TCHAT provides focused care with a limited number of sessions. We give students the care they need, when they need it, conveniently arranged through you and your school. Our focused services assess and address a student's mental health needs, and if those needs extend beyond what TCHAT offers, we will recommend and connect the family to community services. This may include communication with doctors, community mental health programs, and more.



Signs a student may benefit from TCHAT:

Changes in Mood or Behavior at School or Home

- >> Social isolation
- >> Less interest in normal activities
- >> Changes in sleep
- >> Often sad or angry
- >> Outbursts and extreme irritability
- >> Significant change in academic performance

Anxiety or High Stress

- >> Feeling fearful
- >> Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- >> Avoiding certain places or people
- >> Panic attacks (episodes of breathing fast, heart racing, pressure in chest, etc.)

Challenging Relationships

- >> Arguing with friends, teachers, or family
- >> Sudden changes in friendships or relationships
- >> No longer interested in important relationships
- >> School avoidance or refusal

Thoughts of Suicide or Self-Injury (not in active crisis)

- >> Injuries that aren't accidents
- >> Statements about being a burden to others
- >> Statements about not wanting to live or not wanting to wake up

Eligibility & Basics



When should I refer a student to TCHATT?

If you're concerned about a student's mental health, consider TCHATT. We were designed specifically to support student mental health.

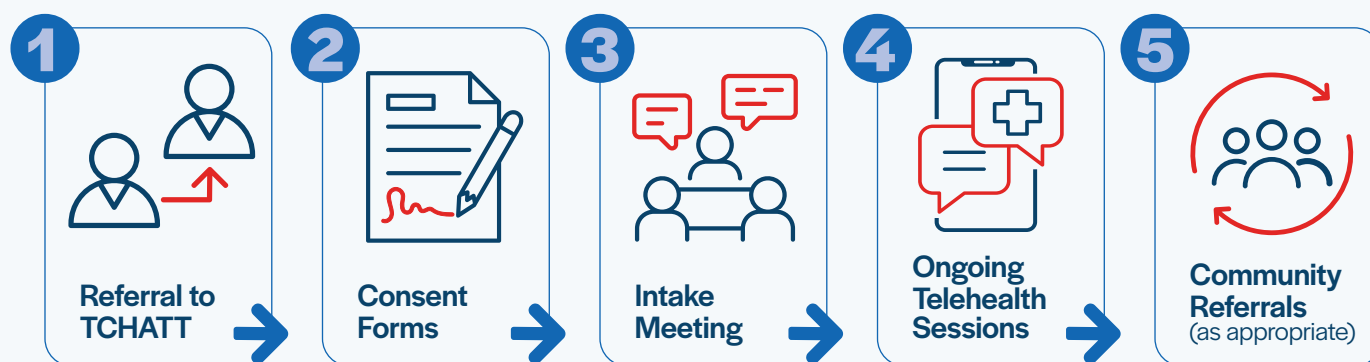
Does TCHATT provide crisis services?

No, TCHATT is not a crisis service. If you think a student needs an evaluation today because they are actively suicidal or homicidal, or experiencing delusions or hallucinations, you should activate your school's emergency protocol. Students with active plans or attempts at self-harm or harm to others need immediate attention.

I'm worried about a student, but is suggesting counseling too much?

Not at all. You and others at school are important eyes and ears on your students. If you see a sudden change in a student or just have a concern about their emotions, behavior, or stress level, please reach out to their parent/guardian to bring up TCHATT as an option. TCHATT can then help the student and family find the right care.

Steps in the TCHATT Process for Enrolled Schools



See Referral Process Checklist at end of this packet for details.

Benefits of TCHATT



Does virtual counseling work for students?

Absolutely. Research has shown virtual mental health care to be as effective as seeing a counselor in person for many children and youth. Reaching TCHATT clinicians via a computer or smartphone can make it easier for many students and families to get mental health support. We use evidence-based approaches to achieve positive outcomes for our students and work with parents/guardians to ensure TCHATT is the best-fitting approach for their child.

How common are mental health needs in students?

About 1 in 5 children have a diagnosable mental health, learning, or behavioral condition—and many more have symptoms of mental health needs.

How can students and families benefit from mental health care like TCHATT?

Mental health care and support can help students be more successful in school and have more self-confidence. TCHATT helps students reduce anxiety, manage emotions, and cope with challenges. Students who get treatment can and do improve.

Is TCHATT for the whole family?

TCHATT focuses on identifying and addressing the needs of the student who is referred. Multiple siblings from the same family can be referred (must also be in pre-K to 12th grade in school). We help parents and guardians support their child(ren), and can provide community referrals to help meet other family needs.

Is there a cost for TCHATT services?

No, TCHATT is provided at no cost to students, families, and schools.

Scheduling & Location



How long does it take to get started with TCHATT?

About 2-3 weeks after all referral forms and consents are completed.

What are TCHATT hours and appointment times?

TCHATT is open year-round, including winter, spring, and summer breaks. We are closed on most federal holidays. TCHATT is staffed Monday to Friday. Services that take place at school end when the school day ends; home-based services may be available later.

How long are TCHATT appointments?

- >> Intake appointment times vary. Your local TCHATT partner will let the family know how much time to reserve for this appointment.
- >> Ongoing and follow-up appointments are 45-60 minutes.
- >> Please ensure a student logs on before the scheduled start time.

Where do TCHATT appointments take place?

TCHATT partners with each school, district, and family to decide where and how mental health care will work best for their student(s).

- >> TCHATT is a virtual service only.
- >> Depending on the arrangement with your school and district, appointments may be in a private space at the school, another location, or home.

Does TCHATT have language translation services available?

- >> Translators are provided for families when needed.
- >> TCHATT materials are available in English and Spanish. If you need them in other languages, please ask your TCHATT team.

How does my local TCHATT partner contact me and the students' parents/guardians?

During the referral process, your local TCHATT partner will let you know what phone number or email to look out for when TCHATT calls, texts, or emails you or a parent/guardian.

Roles & Participation



As a school counselor and TCHATT liaison, what is my role in TCHATT?

Your role is to help a student and family understand TCHATT, how it may help, and how to sign up. You are responsible for entering the referral to TCHATT into TRAYT. (See the Referral Checklist at the end of this document.)

Once a family is signed up, if the appointments occur in school, your role is to locate the student in time for their appointment and ensure they log on and attend.

Beyond appointment times, what information will I have about a student's TCHATT sessions?

What a student or parent/guardian shares in a TCHATT session and the plans families make with the TCHATT team are confidential. It is up to a parent/guardian to decide if they'd like to sign a release to share more details with you or the school.

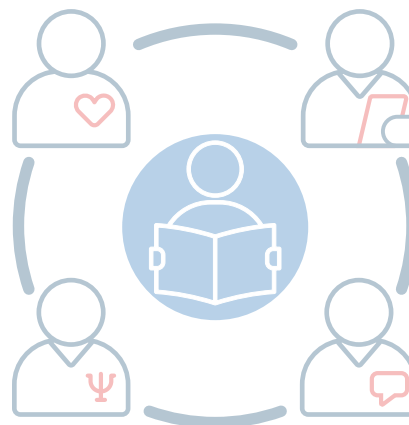
What is the role of parents/guardians in TCHATT?

Parents and guardians are an important part of a child's TCHATT journey. It's important for parents/guardians to know how treatment is going for their child.

- >> Parents/guardians must give consent for their child to join TCHATT.
- >> Parents/guardians must be part of an initial TCHATT assessment. The TCHATT clinician will discuss ongoing participation needs with parents/guardians.
- >> Students aged 18 and older can give their own consent and can choose to have their parents/guardians involved.

Who are the TCHATT clinicians? What credentials do they have?

Our specialists include child and adolescent psychiatrists and psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, licensed master social workers, licensed marriage and family therapists, and licensed professional counselors.



Counselor Tool: Sample Language



Sample Language to Explain TCHATT to Parents/Guardians



I would like to share a helpful resource with you; it's a program named TCHATT, and I think [name of student] would benefit from it. This program is free and funded by the state. Your child seems to be struggling with [note specific emotional or behavioral challenges], and I think TCHATT can help them.

At least 1 in 5 children and teens have challenges with their emotions, behavior, or relationships. TCHATT counselors give focused mental health help to students and families, which can make a big difference. It's completely voluntary and very convenient.



How TCHATT Works:



TCHATT gives your child access to virtual visits with local, licensed mental health professionals. They can connect using a smartphone or computer.

It's a free program available in schools across Texas, and you don't need insurance. (They may ask about insurance only to help connect you with other community services your child may need.)

Your child's sessions are private and held in a quiet place. TCHATT doesn't tell me or the school what you or your child share unless you ask them to (give consent).

First, you'll complete some forms, and then TCHATT will meet with you and your child to assess what your child may need.

Then, if TCHATT is a good fit, they will make a plan with you for TCHATT sessions. They'll tell you when and for how long and talk to you about how you can be involved along the way.

After your child finishes their TCHATT sessions, they may no longer need support. But if they do, TCHATT will connect your family to community services.



Mental health care can make a big difference.



Students often:

Do better in school.

Have more self-confidence.

Learn to handle anxiety, stress, challenges, and tough feelings.



I can help you sign up for the program.



[Counselors! Share other details here about how TCHATT works at your school, including where and when appointments happen, how you as the liaison help the family sign-up, etc.]



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Texas Child Health Access
Through Telemedicine

Counselor Tool: Referral Checklist



We work to make the signup process as easy as possible. It includes both you as the liaison and your local TCHATT team. Below is a list of items you will need to gather from the family and student so you can complete the referral.

Follow these steps:

1. Discuss TCHATT with the parent/guardian of a student who may benefit.

Or discuss it directly with the student if they are age 18+.

See **sample language** on the previous page with suggestions on how to talk about TCHATT.

If the parent/guardian (or student age 18+) is interested, begin the referral process by collecting information from the family to submit a referral in TRAYT.

2. Submit a referral in TRAYT: <https://tchattschools.trayt.health/>. Be ready to provide the following:

☐ **Confirm your information** & list an alternate school contact (in case TCHATT needs to reach you and you're not available).

☐ **Student details:**

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Name | ☐ If they have a disability/accommodations |
| ☐ DOB | ☐ Grade level |
| ☐ Gender | ☐ Contact information (home address, phone, email) |
| ☐ Ethnicity/race | ☐ Preferred language and pronouns. |

☐ **Parent/legal guardian information:**

- ☐ Name(s)
- ☐ Contact information (phone to call or text, email, address)
- ☐ Preferred language
- ☐ Emergency contact
- ☐ Best times to call parent/guardian.

☐ **Reason(s) for referral.**

☐ **Additional notes, documents, or information** that would help facilitate effective TCHATT services to this family.

3. After You Refer...

☐ You can check TRAYT to review a list of submitted referrals. You will only be able to see if the referral is submitted, not any additional details on the status.

☐ **Parent/guardian consent:** Your local TCHATT team will contact the parent/guardian to learn more. The parent/guardian will be asked to sign consent forms and provide any additional information TCHATT needs to get started, such as custody paperwork or health information..

Once all referral and consent forms are complete, the first meeting/assessment will be scheduled. If TCHATT, the student, and their parent/guardian determine TCHATT is a good fit, ongoing appointments will be scheduled.

Thank you for submitting the referral. The HRI will reach out if anything further is needed.



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