

Many school districts across British Columbia are considering adopting an electronic student record system. This entails moving away from keeping hard copies of student files, which contain confidential reports and materials, to having these records accessible only through an electronic data base. Potentially, school psychologists may transition into working under these new conditions and BCASP recognizes the importance to provide guidance to members on this issue. As such, the intent of this advisory is to inform members of potential issues and practice considerations related to electronic filing systems.

1. *Issues of Confidentiality*

Districts need to ensure that there is a high level of security within the system or network that stores these files. This security should address internal and external issues. First, internal security should entail having restricted access as to which employees can access the files; access should be limited to those who could access the student's confidential file (administrators, professionals, and teachers working within student services). This list would be revolving from year to year, and perhaps even from term to term, requiring districts to be vigilant in making sure it was up to date. Second, the information technology departments within school districts need to ensure that the centralized e-files are protected from outside sources attempting to break into the system.

2. *Criteria for the Contents within the E-file*

There needs to be clear criteria as to what is kept within a student's e-file. For example, minutes from meetings, reports generated from professionals working within the school district, IEPs, and so on.

3. *Scanning Reports from Outside Sources*

Many professional reports have a disclaimer that is similar to this: *The information within this report is of a confidential and sensitive nature and must not be duplicated without formal written consent.* Shifting to an e-file system would entail the scanning of documents that may not have originated by the school district's own staff. This is a complication that school districts will have to consider, and reconcile, prior to pursuing e-files.

Specifically for BCASP members, it will be important to notify parents and guardians of the electronic storage, associated risks to privacy, and safeguards in place to protect the information. It will also be important for school psychologists to have confidence that records cannot be lost due to equipment failure. This is consistent with *Ethical Principle II.4 Promoting Accountable Record Keeping*, which recognizes school psychologists share a role in safeguarding the privacy of psycho-educational records.

Moving to an electronic record system seems unavoidable given that other groups, such as the medical community, have adopted this system and also preserve confidential records. Both NASP and APA have committees that are tackling problems around this issue. It will be important to continue to be open to new methods and processes that may be recommended by these groups. When school districts begin to move to e-files, it is essential that BCASP members encourage the decision makers to consider the points highlighted within this advisory.