A Virtually Assisted School Team (VAST) is a collaboration between the Montana Safe Schools Center (MSSC), UM’s Counseling and Psychology Departments, and the School of Social Work. A team is comprised of graduate interns who are recruited, trained, and supervised through this interdisciplinary partnership.

The VAST interns use video conferencing to provide interventions for mental, behavioral and academic health and connections for students and families with other non-clinical supports and resources. There are many reasons someone might request VAST support.

**WHEN A STUDENT:**
- needs help coping with difficult life circumstances
- struggles with focus, anxiety or withdrawal
- experiences housing or food insecurity (or has any basic needs concern)
- lacks the ability to make and maintain friendships
- struggles with academic skills
- is grieving a significant loss such as the death of a family member
- struggles with emotional regulation
WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Researchers have found that tele-mental health services are just as effective as comparable in-person mental health care across many populations and settings (Hilty et al., 2013, Langarizade et al., 2017). Tele-mental health has been utilized to successfully support children with ADHD (Meyers 2015), depression (Nelson, Bernard, & Cain, 2003), and anxiety (Carpenter et al., 2018). Potential benefits also are reflective of tele-mental health and include positive coping, gains in mental health and wellness, and the therapeutic benefits of talking through challenging feelings. To ensure skills and practices stay consistent graduate interns will be sharing specific goals and tools with parents and teacher/counselors to ensure holistic improvement.

WHAT SERVICES CAN BE PROVIDED?

- **Tele-Counseling** - promotes behavioral and emotional change in the areas of mental health, goal-setting, communication, coping skills, and self-esteem.
- **Tele-School Counseling** - supports emotional management and social skills development, remove barriers to academic achievement, and plan for academic and career options.
- **Tele-School Psychology** - provides mental and behavioral health interventions, academic interventions, problem solve learning needs, and support crisis response and recovery.
- **Tele-School Social Work** - offers emotional and behavioral support, provide links between home, school and community, and support interventions for academic and social success.

WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA TO PARTICIPATE?

For schools to participate and to be in compliance with HIPPA regulations, criteria need to be in place to provide a safe and private telehealth environment. Schools will be responsible for providing a secure device and private space for student use, emergency contact information for on-site school contacts and families, and community referral sources. Parent permission is required as well as authorization to exchange information, videotape sessions and participate in a study by the UM team.

HOW MUCH TO SERVICES COST?

Thanks to a grant that the Montana Safe Schools Center received from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, all VAST support is free to participating schools and families.

HOW CAN STUDENTS AT OUR SCHOOL RECEIVE SERVICES FROM VAST?

Contact Tammy Tolleson Knee, School Support Liaison for MSSC at tamara.tollesonknee@mso.umt.edu or 406.243.4974