



# Choices Handbook



North Vancouver  
**School District**  
the natural place to learn®

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## Introduction

*We provide world-class instruction and a rich diversity of engaging programs to inspire success for every student and bring communities together to learn, share and grow.*

The North Vancouver School District is committed to a vision in which all students can reach their potential in meaningful, engaging ways. Providing opportunities for student success involves a team approach with the recognition that students learn in diverse ways and may require different learning opportunities. Our 10 Year Strategic Plan and our 3 Year Operating Plan outline specific goals the School District is working toward in order to promote student success:

- expand the availability of best instructional practices and enriched curriculum
- encourage the growth of collaborative, adaptive and personalized learning environments
- nurture an inspiring and healthy work environment
- develop and promote innovation and sustainable programs
- provide leadership in environmental education and sustainability practices
- strengthen and expand reciprocal community relations

The North Vancouver School District has a long history of academic success, innovative curriculum, excellence in sports, a focus on the arts and a diverse range of programs of choice and academies. We also recognize that all learners are different and may require additional arrangements to reach their full potential. The School District, in keeping with Ministry of Education mandates and best educational practices, supports the “inclusive education” model. This model advocates for all students to be included as far as possible in mainstream schools. Learning Assistance programs, Life Skills programs, special education staffing, and classroom teacher adaptations to curriculum and assessment have allowed students with a variety of learning differences and physical and cognitive challenges to receive the assistance they need. This model is highly effective.

However, an area of challenge has been providing this same type of school-based inclusive support for students with social, emotional and behaviour issues. These students may have multiple barriers in their lives (family issues, anxiety, depression, etc.) that causes them to behave in ways that may be disruptive, withdrawn or inappropriate. These behaviours may have a negative impact on their social/emotional well-being, can impede their academic progress and effect their social interactions. We often refer to these students as “at-risk” youth. In the past, students in grades 8-12 with these types of chronic behaviour issues have been referred to an “alternate program”.

The Choices program, available at each secondary school, has reduced the number of students being referred to Mountainside, the district’s alternate secondary school. The program is designed to support students with social/emotional and behaviour issues within the context of a mainstream secondary school. Most students want to stay in their local mainstream secondary school, maintain connections to peer groups, extra-curricular activities and particular classes and teachers. With Choices, they can now access specific, personalized and flexible arrangements to keep them in their local community.

## Choices Purpose

Choices is currently in place in all six mainstream secondary schools in North Vancouver. The purpose of Choices is to support students with social/emotional and behavioural issues. These students need assistance to recognize, understand and create strategies to overcome challenges that create barriers to learning. They remain within their school community, engaging in academic and social activities that fit their learning needs. They also have the opportunity to connect to teachers, support workers and counsellors who are able to adapt their program without having to refer them to an alternate program. The Choices classroom is a place to facilitate connection and belonging to the school community. The ultimate goal is to have students maintain their educational experience at their regular mainstream high school. Students who are involved in Choices may simply be connected to a support worker on a regular basis, may come to the Choices classroom for assistance for part of a regularly scheduled class, or have a scheduled Choices block where the Choices teacher provides flexible and adapted curriculum. The key component of Choices is the partnership with classroom teachers, counsellors, parents and community partners to collaborate, create and maintain a program that meets the social/emotional/academic needs of students.

Choices was created to provide these specific supports for at-risk youth within the mainstream environment.

## Choices Guiding Principles

- Choices is not an alternate program or school
- many students with social/emotional/behaviour issues can be supported in their mainstream school
- classroom teachers are the key providers of support: they identify difficulties, provide curriculum adaptations, develop positive relationships with students, and connect students to other professionals
- schools must continue to “own” their students and pursue available and potential resources before considering a referral to Mountainside Secondary School
- success for at-risk students requires a “team approach” which utilizes the skills and expertise of the classroom teacher, counsellors, Choices and other special education staff, parents, and community agencies

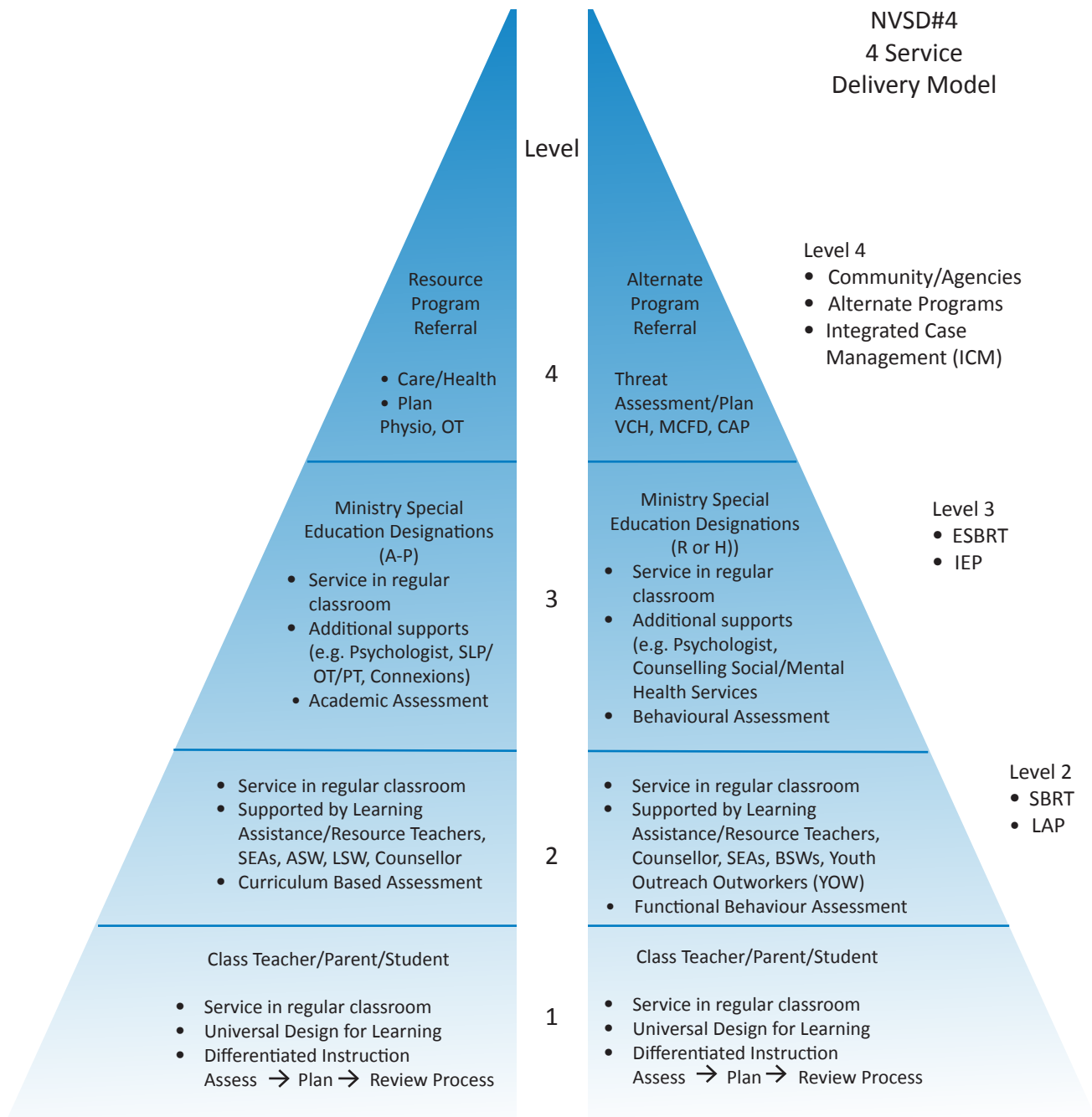
## Learning Services Model of Support

All North Vancouver schools, in keeping with Ministry of Education policies and best practices, support “inclusive education” through site-based Learning Services programs. All students can be successful in their local school if the right interventions are in place. Special education programs, counselling, and classroom teacher adaptations to curriculum and assessment have allowed students with a variety of learning and behavioural challenges to be successful.

Some students may require both the social/emotional support of Choices and the academic adaptations provided by other Special Education services. The type and level of intervention increases or decreases as students’ needs change over time. This continuum of support allows students to receive what they need when they need it. Students can move between these tiers as necessary. Diagram 1 outlines the Special Education tiers. Diagram 2 outlines the Choices tiers and Diagram 3 connects the two.

Diagram #1

# Inclusive Education Service Delivery Model



**Academic Learning**

Supporting Students with Learning Challenges

- Inclusive Education 44
- Learning Assistance

**Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)**

Supporting Students with Behaviour/Mental Health Challenges

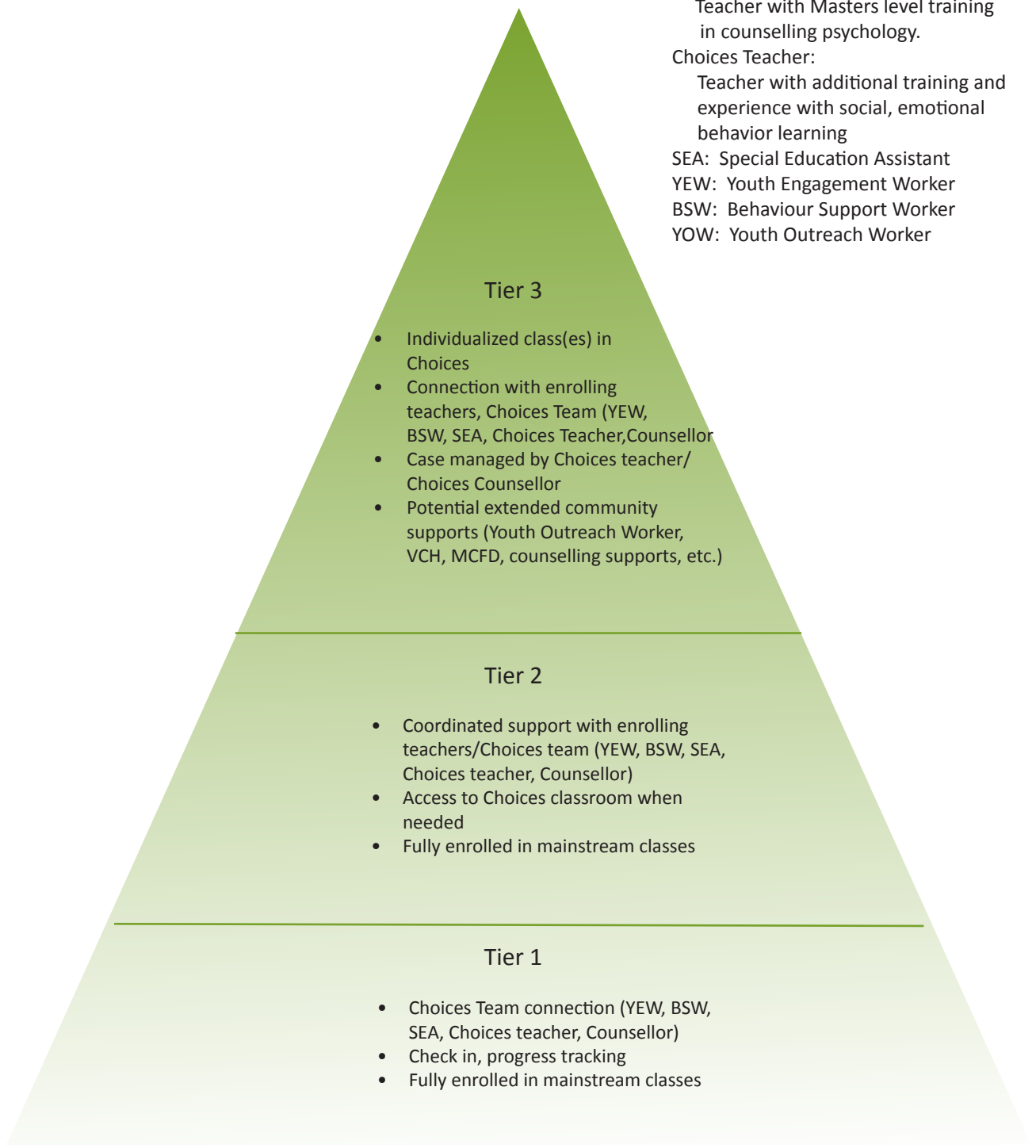
- Safe & Caring Schools

Diagram #2  
CHOICES Tiers of Support

Intervention



Prevention



**Staffing:**

**Counsellor:**

Teacher with Masters level training in counselling psychology.

**Choices Teacher:**

Teacher with additional training and experience with social, emotional behavior learning

SEA: Special Education Assistant

YEW: Youth Engagement Worker

BSW: Behaviour Support Worker

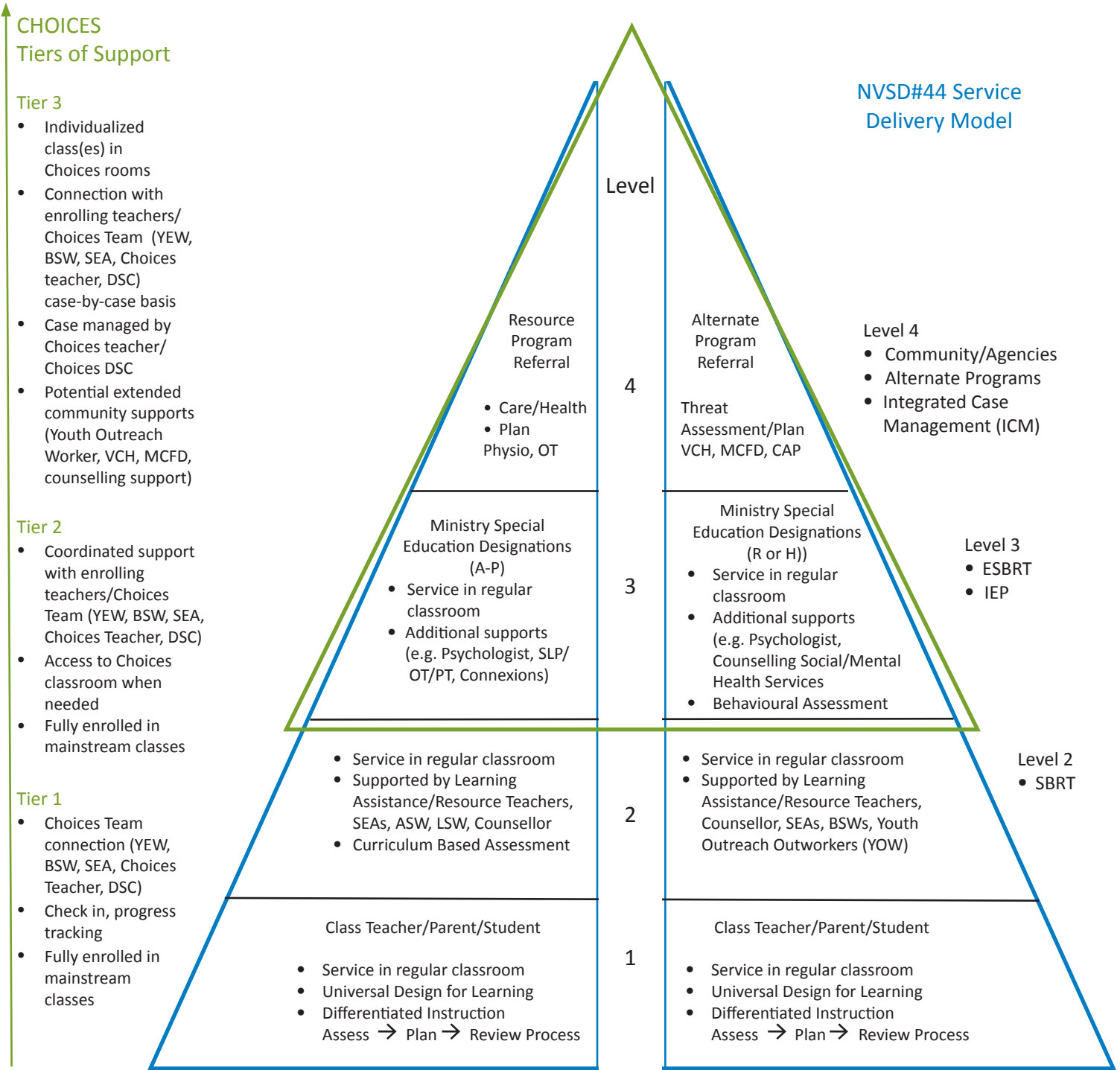
YOW: Youth Outreach Worker

The 3 Choices Tiers of Support begin at Level 2/3 of Special Education Service Delivery Model

Diagram #3

## Inclusive Education Service Delivery Model Including Choices Tiers of Support

Intervention



Prevention

**Academic Learning**

Supporting Students with Learning Challenges

- Inclusive Education

**Social-Emotional Learning**

Supporting Students with Behaviour/Mental Health Challenges

- Safe & Caring Schools

## Student Profile

Students in Choices have additional social/emotional/behavioural challenges that historically resulted in alternate school placement. The BC Ministry of Education states that alternate programs:

*focus on the educational, social and emotional issues for those students whose needs are not being met in a traditional school program. An alternate education program provides its support through differentiated instruction, program delivery and enhanced counselling services based on student need.*

The profile of Choices and alternate school students may be very similar. Alternate students need not only specific, personalized support but the addition of a smaller school environment, an increased teacher to student ratio, increased flexibility in scheduling and more intense on-site community resources.

“Students who attend alternate school programs are often the most vulnerable population in the school system. Alternate school programs have disproportionate numbers of children and youth in care, students of aboriginal ancestry, children and youth living in poverty or on the street, gifted children who have difficulty in social situations, children and youth involved in drugs, alcohol and the sex trade and youth with mental health concerns. Alternate school programs offer an opportunity for these vulnerable and at-risk students to experience success.”

Alternate Program Policy, Ministry of Education, 2011.

More specifically, Choices and alternate students may have one or more of the following:

- Ministry R or H behaviour designation
- a learning disability
- in crisis (family, self)
- inappropriate overt behaviour
- attention difficulties
- anxiety, depression, mood disorder
- a history of poor/irregular attendance
- a history of family/personal issues (e.g. bullying, family crisis etc.)
- a history of poor academic engagement and performance
- a history of behaviour incidents
- a history of drug and alcohol use

Chronic poor attendance and poor academic performance are strong indicators that there are other issues interfering with the student’s ability to be successful. These two indicators on their own or in combination require investigation and a potential referral to Choices.

Trained Choices staff have the skills and expertise to understand and program for students with the complexities listed above. As each secondary school gains further experience in successfully meeting the needs of such students, the number of alternate school referrals is expected to decline.



## Choices Tiers

Choices is for students who have been identified through the School Based Resource Team referral process. Identified Choices students may be assigned to one of three tiers. Choices is not designed as a supervisory space for incidental behaviour issues or in-school suspensions. Students requiring this type of supervision should be directed to school-based administration.

### Tier 1 - Developing Relationships

Students in Tier 1 need a supportive connection to adults who have the ability to track their academic progress, attendance, and behaviour and step in when needed.

- limited contact with Choices staff during instructional time
- students remain enrolled in mainstream classes (as shown on class lists)
- check-ins with Choices Team (primarily with YEW outside of class time)
- monitoring of academic/social/behavioural progress in consultation with classroom teachers, counsellors and parents
- discussions with teachers around appropriate curriculum adaptations
- monitoring transition back into mainstream classes (from Mountainside Secondary School or other Choices tiers)

### Tier 2 - Providing a Non-Judgemental Space

Students in Tier 2 require additional supports. These students have more of a connection to Choices and are given the flexibility to come to the Choices room during class time for academic and emotional support

- students are still enrolled in mainstream classes (as shown on class lists)
- academic program provided and assessed by classroom teacher
- students are expected to attend their mainstream classes but may access the Choices room if needed. Access can be gained through self-regulation or through teacher regulation (used proactively, not as a consequence)
- contact with Choices Team during instructional time
- monitoring of academic/social/behavioural progress, in consultation with classroom teachers, counsellors and parents
- discussions with teachers around appropriate adaptations
- potential connections with community agencies (e.g. MCFD, VCH)
- access counselling services provided by the school-based clinical counsellor

### Tier 3 - Creating a Sense of Belonging

Students in Tier 3 require the highest level of interaction with the Choices team. They are removed from class(es) and receive curriculum in the Choices classroom. They may also receive specific behavioural strategies to improve self-esteem and develop self-advocacy and leadership skills. The focus will be for students to feel a sense of belonging and connectedness.

- scheduled to be in Choices for one or more blocks
- working on an individualized program coordinated through the Choices teacher, the classroom teachers, and potentially Distributed Learning
- extensive contact with Choices Team during instructional time
- monitoring of academic/social/behavioural progress in consultation with classroom teachers, counsellors and parents
- variety of curriculum delivery methods including self-paced packages, blended distributed learning and projects
- discussions with teachers around appropriate adaptations
- potential connections with community agencies (e.g. MCFD, VCH)
- commitment to counselling services provided by the school-based clinical counsellor

## Choices Attendance Tracking

Students may attend specific classes in Choices; or come to Choices part way through a class as needed. Collaboration and communication between classroom teachers and members of the Choices team are essential components to ensure flexibility. The following best practices have been put in place to track student attendance:

### Choices Tier 1 Students

- connect with the Choices team (teacher, YEW or Counsellor) outside of regular class time
- if connections do occasionally take place during class time, a member of the Choices team will inform the classroom teacher
- the classroom teacher should mark the student as present

### Choices Tier 2 Students

- receive more intensive Choices support
- may attend for a portion of the regular class and Choices for the remainder
- teachers will complete their attendance in conjunction with the Choices team
- students marked as present (working on curriculum in alternate location)
- member of the Choices team will communicate with the classroom teacher indicating that the student was in attendance at Choices
- the Choices teacher will keep records of attendance specifics
- communication between Choices and the regular classroom teachers will ensure the safety and whereabouts of the student in the case of emergency procedures (e.g. fire drill, evacuation)
- a Tier 2 student may need to work for the entire block in Choices
- a member of the Choices team will communicate with the classroom teacher
- the student is in attendance, but working in an alternate location
- the classroom teacher should mark this student as present

### Choices Tier 3 Students

- receiving the most intensive Choices support
- may be attending Choices on a regular basis for a indeterminate period of time
- the student would remain on the classroom teacher's BCeSIS class list
- the classroom teacher may continue to be responsible for providing curriculum, evaluating student work and reporting, in consultation with the Choices teacher
- a member of the Choices team will communicate with the classroom teacher on a regular basis about the student's attendance
- the student should be marked as present by the classroom teacher unless the Choices team representative informs them that the student is absent
- communication between Choices and the classroom teachers will ensure the safety and whereabouts of the student in the case of emergency procedures (e.g. fire drill, evacuation-accountability for student)
- some Tier 3 students may be working on curriculum provided through Distributed Learning or by the Choices teacher - these students would be enrolled in a specific course or support block and assigned to the Choices teacher for attendance purposes.

## Case Management

The teacher/counsellor who coordinates a student's social/emotional/behaviour program is identified by the School Based Resource Team (SBRT). This teacher/counsellor is known as the case manager. The Case Manager liaises with parents and others involved, writes the IEP and monitors student progress. The Case Manager for a student in Choices may be the Choices teacher or a counsellor. The Case Manager selection is based on student relationships and needs, staff expertise, and intensity of services required.

### Checklist for the Case Manager

- review previous IEP or Learning Assistance Plan to determine if it is still relevant
- obtain and review current assessments/reports
- provide parent participation forms in advance of the IEP meeting date
- set a date/venue for the IEP meeting and invite appropriate personnel
- make appropriate file review and progress reports available
- circulate current IEP to staff
- prepare an IEP meeting agenda and ensure student attendance
- consider whether current Ministry designation continues to be appropriate or not
- summarize the IEP discussion
- within a week of the IEP meeting, write and circulate the IEP
- attach any IEP progress reports to Report Cards
- liaison with/make referrals to outside agencies (VCH, MCFD)

## Ministry Special Education Identification

Students who require additional behaviour services will have an R (moderate behaviour/mental illness) or an H (intensive behaviour/serious mental illness) designation. Students who are referred to Choices and do not have an R, H or other designation, will be assigned a Case Manager who will be responsible for gathering, preparing and sending the designation request to Learning Services. A few students in Choices will not have a designation. Classroom teachers are responsible for reading IEPs for designated students and adapting programs to meet student needs. The Choices team and the LAC teacher will work collaboratively with the classroom teachers to make appropriate adaptations to curriculum, assessment and design social-emotional learning opportunities.

## Individual Education Plan (IEP)

According to the BC Ministry of Education: “students with special needs have disabilities of an intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional, or behavioural nature, or have a learning disability or have exceptional gifts or talents.” In BC, these students have a Ministry Special Education designation.

Special Education services enable students to have equitable access to learning opportunities to ensure they achieve the goals of their Individualized Education Plans. IEPs can include academic and social, emotional and behavioural learning goals.

Students with a Ministry Special Education designation have an IEP that includes:

- learning outcomes that are different from, or in addition to the expected learning outcomes set out in the BC Ministry of Education curriculum, including those from a different grade level
- a list of additional services
- a list of adapted/modified materials, instruction and assessment methods

Students accessing Choices may be struggling with behaviour issues and thus benefit from a behaviour assessment that can be used to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of behavioural support. The process of gathering information gives team members insight into the reasons why a student may engage in challenging behaviours. The two primary methods for gathering this information are interviews and direct observation. The primary purpose of a behaviour assessment is to highly individualize and structure the student’s learning environment in order to assist them in meeting their educational goals.

A Functional Behaviour Assessment involves a clearly defined process that aims to:

- describe and verify the seriousness of the problem
- refine the definition of the problem behaviour
- collect information on possible functions of the problem behaviour
- provide an analysis using data “triangulation” (synthesizing data from multiple sources) and/or problem pathway analysis
- generate a hypothesis statement regarding the probable function of the problem behaviour

Developing the IEP following the Functional Behaviour Assessment aims to:

- test the hypothesis statement regarding the function of the problem behaviour by identifying goals and strategies to support and remediate these behaviours
- develop and implement an IEP that clearly focuses on strategies to address these behaviours
- monitor the implementation of the plan
- evaluate effectiveness of the plan
- modify the plan as needed

The success of a plan hinges on:

- understanding why the student behaves in a certain way, (anti-social or pro-social behaviours)
- identifying the skills the student lacks that may be impeding appropriate behaviour and teaching these skills
- replacing inappropriate behaviour with a more socially acceptable behaviour
- recognizing the links between academic and behavioural learning
- working in partnership with community agencies when appropriate

Students requiring a behaviour assessment will likely have an IEP and a Ministry Special Education designation due to social, emotional, behavioural and/or mental health challenges. These students may also need a Safety Management Plan. The IEP team may include the case manager, Choices teacher and counsellor.

## Transitions

Choices is not a permanent placement. The goal is to maintain existing relationships and connections to academic and elective classes, sports and extracurricular activities that are working for the student. If possible, the student will develop the skills to reintegrate back fully into the mainstream school. Choices is designed to be fluid, based on student needs. However, when some students require a change in their level of assistance, a transition process is necessary to ensure that their specific needs are met. These transitions are facilitated by two teams:

### School Based Resource Team (SBRT):

The SBRT is a problem-solving team typically comprised of an administrator, specialist teachers, classroom teachers and counsellors who develop and implement instructional strategies and coordinate plans for students with academic and social/emotional needs. Parents must be informed if their student will be discussed at SBRT.

### District Resource Team (DRT):

The DRT is a problem-solving team comprised of a Director of Learning Services, the Choices District Administrator, the Principal of Mountainside Secondary School and the Counsellor assigned to Mountainside Secondary School. The DRT provides recommendations to support students in their mainstream school through Choices, Learning Assistance and community partners, provides recommendations for students transitioning to Mountainside Secondary School, and assists in the placement of at-risk youth from out of district to a mainstream secondary school or Mountainside Secondary school.

The purpose of these teams is to:

*ensure the successful transition and right placement of students within schools, between schools, as well as in/out of district*

Three transitions are connected to Choices:

1. Mainstream to Choices
2. Choices to Mountainside Secondary School
3. Mountainside Secondary School to Mainstream via Choices

1. Transition Process: **Mainstream to Choices** (see Diagram 4 - p. 19):

Initial Referral to Grade Counsellor, requesting additional supports:

- initial referral form completed by teacher, counsellor, administrator or through Elementary articulation
- student/parent referrals through the counsellor
- counsellor meets with student to discuss issues and needs that may be interfering with appropriate behaviour/attendance/academic success
- counsellor completes a file review, checks for IEP, follows up with all teachers involved with the student, and suggests adaptations prior to Choices referral
- counsellor monitors classroom adaptations for success by working with classroom teacher

If adaptations are not working then:

SBRT Referral:

- counsellor completes detailed referral form for SBRT meeting
- counsellor attends SBRT and presents student concerns
- SBRT decision is made regarding Choices placement and level of support (Tier 1, 2, 3)
- counsellor informs student, parents and teachers of SBRT outcome
- case manager presents submission to Choices Referral Team

Choices Referral Meeting:

- counsellors review submissions with Choices team
- a learning plan is designed
- level of support is finalized
- a Case Manager is assigned

Intake Meeting with Student/Parent:

- Choices team explains program and student goals
- attains signed documentation from student/parents

## 2. Transition Process: **Choices to Mountainside Secondary School**

- student is referred through SBRT (School Based Resource Team) to the District Resource Team (DRT). Required documentation including an updated IEP, Behaviour Assessment, notes from the SBRT, attendance records, and academic records provide valuable information to assist in the placement of the student. Documents required are listed in the Personalized Learning Support Checklist
- the DRT reviews the student profile/documentation
- the DRT schedules a meeting and invites a representative from the SBRT, typically the case manager, to review the student profile and pertinent documents with the team
- the DRT, in consultation with the school representative, discuss the student file, review the current supports to date, and determine the best plan for the student
- if a return to mainstream is appropriate, recommendations are sent to the school via the representative. These recommendations could include:
  - ~ increased assistance at the class level: i.e. BSW and/or SEA support in class
  - ~ adaptations for the student through the development of a new IEP
  - ~ a modification of the student timetable
  - ~ inclusion of work experience opportunities
  - ~ increased elective opportunities, use of blended Distributed Learning etc.
  - ~ Choices: Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3
- if a referral to Mountainside Secondary School is appropriate, the case manager will return with this recommendation to the SBRT, and contact the student's parents/guardians to let them know the DRT decision. Referral to Mountainside Secondary School could include full or partial enrollment and potential cross-enrollment to a mainstream secondary school or District program
- the Counsellor assigned to Mountainside Secondary School will take the student referral package and present the student to the Mountainside SBRT
- a Case Manager will be assigned and will contact the parent/guardian and student for Mountainside intake

## 3. Transition Process: **Mountainside Secondary School to Mainstream via Choices**

- through discussion between the student, school and parent/guardian a request for transition into mainstream school is made to the Mountainside SBRT. This request is made based on student programming needs, progress (both academically and behaviourally) and readiness to return to the mainstream environment
- Mountainside's SBRT will review the transition request. If the recommendation is supportive of the student's referral to mainstream, the student's file is then referred to the District Resource Team. This process allows the DRT an opportunity to review available spaces, appropriate placement and other adaptations that could assist in the transition



- if through the review of the student's file, the DRT does not approve the transition of the student back into the mainstream high school setting at that time, their recommendations, including suggested supports would be discussed with the Counsellor at Mountainside. Mountainside, through the student's Case Manager, would inform the student and the parents/guardians of the current decision and agree to review the file at a later date
- if through the file review process the DRT agrees on the transition of the student back into the regular mainstream high school, then recommendations are forwarded to the school SBRT via the site principal for discussion
- the student's file would be brought forward for review to the mainstream school's SBRT
- the school-based SBRT/Choices SBRT assigns the Case Manager and develops and agrees on the transition plan. The Choices team should be involved, minimally, at a Tier One level for all students transitioning from Mountainside to mainstream
- the Choices team monitors and reviews the student's progress within the first month
- the Choices team consults with the student's classroom teachers to outline the student profile, IEP requirements and adaptations.

#### Other Transitions:

##### 1. Students from Out of District:

These students would apply to the district through Central Registration. Students who identify as coming from an out-of-district alternate program or have an indication of a social/emotional behaviour concern will be referred to the District Resource Team before placement. Students coming from an out-of-district alternate program may be assigned to a mainstream school with Choices or assigned to Mountainside based on their needs. A member of the DRT will contact the previous school for additional information and/or student files and will then contact the student/parents regarding best placement.

##### 2. Students Exiting the North Vancouver School District:

Alternate students or Choices students leaving the District will have a complete file review and an exit meeting to ensure best placement in their new school district.

##### 3. Students Who are Non-Attendees:

Each school must have processes in place to monitor student attendance. Chronic non-attendance should be discussed at each school's SBRT meeting. A plan to increase student attendance must have been tried and documented through the IEP process before a referral to DRT can be considered. Required documents may be difficult to compile. These students will be monitored and provided with outreach through Choices and connections to community supports, with the ultimate goal of re-engagement in a school program.

4. **Students Who Withdraw:**

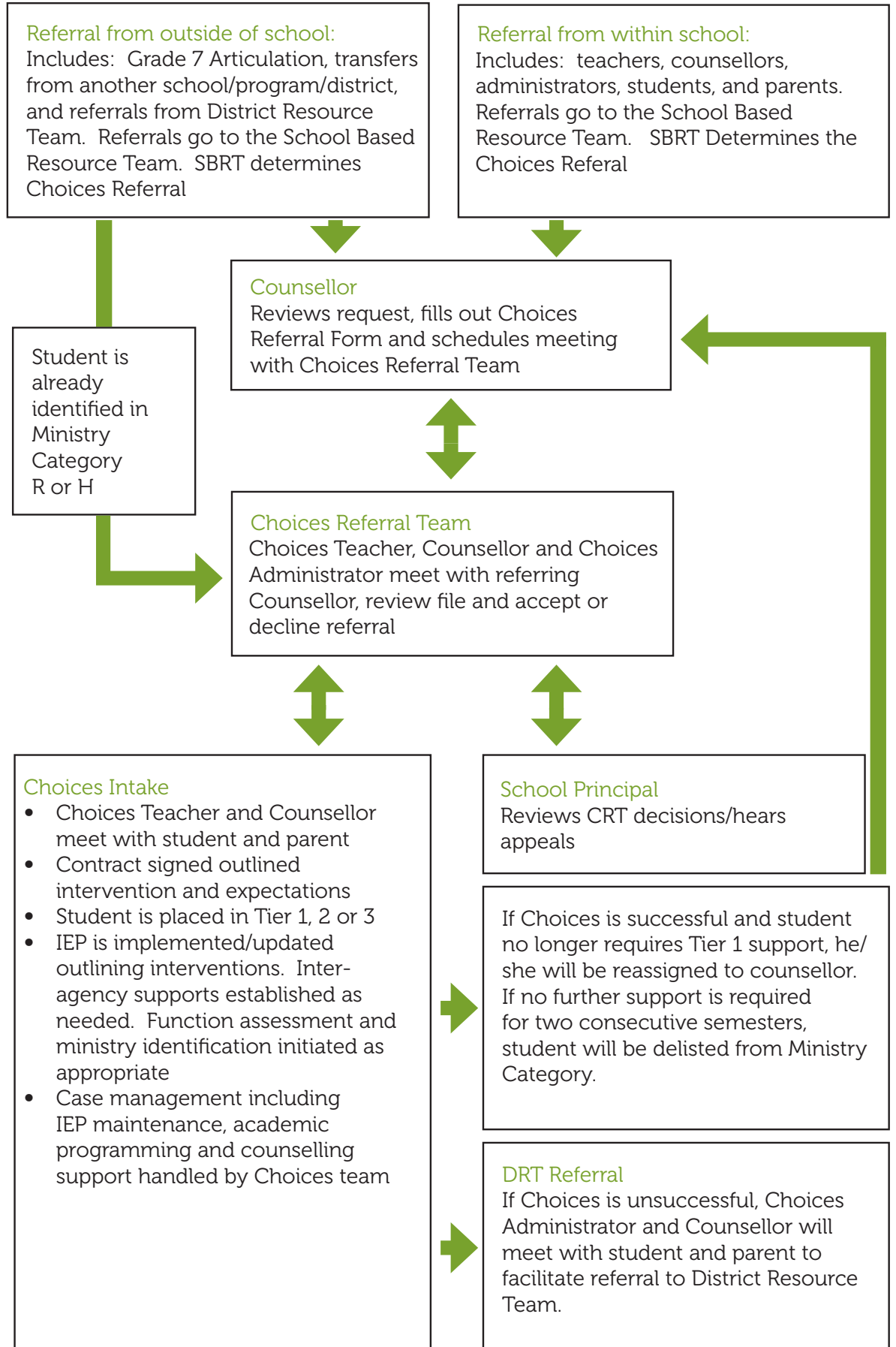
Each school should keep a record of students who are withdrawn by parent/guardians, by counsellors due to non-attendance, or by administrators. These students should be tracked and their new school and school district should be recorded. Students who withdraw and are not attending elsewhere should be sent to the attention to the Choices District Administrator for follow-up.

5. **Students Transferring Between Schools in the District:**

Student transfers are processed through Central Registration during the yearly transfer window or initiated through the Principal to Principal transfer process. Students with social/emotional/behaviour or attendance issues requesting a transfer to a school within the District should be sent to the attention of the District Resource Team. Note that the request for transfer includes all transfers where there are social, emotional and behavioural issues. Whether the transfer is parent/guardian initiated or initiated by school-based administration, correct placements of these students must occur. If transfer requests are approved, the receiving school needs to have the required document and files to program effectively for the student. A transition meeting between the two Case Managers should be facilitated to share pertinent information and plan for student success.

Diagram #4

### CHOICES Referral



## Choices Intake

Students entering Choices will be involved in an intake meeting that includes the student, parent/guardian and Choices team. Typically the Choices team includes: teacher, Youth Engagement Worker, Principal/Vice Principal and Choices counsellor. The purpose of the meeting is to provide a team approach, encourage student commitment to Choices, collaboratively define goals for the student, and discuss academic and behavioural needs.

The Intake Meeting will include:

- an introduction to the Choices team and their roles
- a discussion with the student regarding their challenges/needs, background information, school history and desired level of assistance
- identification of the core social/emotional/behavioural barriers that are resulting in the Choices referral
- a description of Choices and what it can provide
- an explanation of the tiering system and the goal of full re-integration in the mainstream program
- a review of the IEP process, goal setting and monitoring
- an expectation of student engagement with the Counsellor assigned to Choices students
- a review of a behaviour expectations

Required Documentation During Intake:

- attain/disclose information from/to outside agencies
- consent for identification in Ministry Category R/H (if necessary)
- consent for counselling: explaining limits of confidentiality
- consent for behaviour assessments
- consent for YEW / YOW involvement
- consent for Choices community based outings
- student contract outlining their commitment

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Student:

- engage in and commit to counselling supports offered in Choices
- engage in respectful interactions with peer and staff in Choices
- make academic progress based on their IEP goals
- use supports appropriately

### Parent/Guardian:

- attend intake meeting
- support student through on-going communication with Choices team and administration
- support students with IEP goals
- engage with appropriate community support

## Direct Choices Support

### Choices Teacher:

The role of the Choices teacher is to support the student socially, emotionally and academically. Advocacy for the student stems from active communication with administration, teachers, counsellors, district staff, parents/guardians and community partners. Other responsibilities include:

- co-case management with the Counsellor assigned to Choices students or other school personnel where appropriate to facilitate the design and implementation of IEPs, submit ministry identifications, and implement interministerial plans
- connecting with high-risk youth in a non-judgmental, patient and enthusiastic manner.
- collaborating with school-based staff, district staff, parents, students, community partners
- coordinating educational material and advocating for necessary adaptations
- assisting classroom teachers to adapt curriculum to meet the needs of students
- designing and implementing learning programs to meet a variety of needs for different learners
- interpreting curriculum appropriately to accommodate individual differences
- implementing a variety of assessment practices to measure and monitor student progress effectively
- coordinating and scheduling the BSW and YEW, based on student needs
- maintaining a safe and caring environment in the classroom
- managing the Choices budget
- liaison with parents

### Counsellor Assigned to Choices Students: (School Based Clinical Counsellor)

The core responsibility of the counsellor assigned to Choices students is to help them develop insight into the nature of the social/ emotional/behavioural barriers that are impeding their academic success, and to support them in developing strategies to overcome these barriers. This includes:

- participating in the Choices referral and intake process
- clinically engaging Choices students on an ongoing basis
- using a variety of therapeutic interventions that are focused on promoting change
- motivating students to develop an awareness of their challenges
- helping students develop strategies to diminish the impact of their challenges on learning
- liaising with outside agencies and community partners to increase supports for Choices students
- ongoing counselling support for Choices students with specific focus on developing awareness to social/emotional/behavioural barriers to learning
- processing referrals to outside mental health agencies and maintaining inter-ministerial support plans as required
- preparing referrals to and from DRT for students who are either heading to or returning from Mountainside
- writing behavioural assessments including Functional Assessments of Behaviour and all other documentation required for Ministry identification in Categories R and H
- co-case managing with the Grade Counsellor, Choices Teacher or other school personnel where appropriate to facilitate the design and implementation of IEPs, submit ministry identifications, and implement interministerial support plans
- providing direction and support to YEWs and BSWs working with Choices students
- liaising with parents

### Youth Engagement Worker:

The Youth Engagement Worker is a flexible role that is determined by the specific needs of the students in Choices. The role encompasses the duties of an Education Assistant, Behaviour Support Worker and Youth Outreach Worker. Responsibilities include:

- working in a collaborative partnership with the Choices teacher, Counsellor assigned to Choices, Grade Counsellors, and Learning Service staff
- supporting students in all tiers of Choices
- working a flexible schedule to meet the academic, social/emotional and behavioural needs of students, as directed by the Choices teacher
- designing and providing after school programming/opportunities (groups, activities, sporting events etc.) for Choices students as determined by the Choices team
- accompany students to outside agency appointments as required, providing transportation if necessary
- working in the Choices classroom, in regular classrooms, at lunch or before/after school based on student needs and under the direction of the Choices teacher
- interacting with students in a non-judgmental, intentional, goal oriented way
- documenting interactions with youth
- connecting students to appropriate supports in the school and in the community whenever necessary
- networking and collaborating with community partners to share resources and community events
- providing home visits if necessary
- working in collaboration with other district YEW workers to provide after school programs
- providing educational resources around mental health, sexual health and drug prevention
- connecting with community based Youth Outreach Workers to provide wrap around supports for Choices students

### School Based Choices Support

#### Site Based Administrator:

The site based administrator (Principal or Vice-Principal) will be responsible for the daily oversight of the program. This includes:

- scheduling of staff
- supervision and evaluation of Choices teacher and YEW
- allocation of additional Learning Services staff to meet the needs of Choices students (if necessary)
- foster positive relationships between the Choices Team, mainstream teachers, counsellors and Learning Services staff
- attend SBRT/Choices referral and intake meetings as necessary
- communicate with parents of Choices students through Choices intake process
- provide ongoing staff development regarding social/emotional learning
- provide supports in whatever way is needed for Choices i.e. additional resources

### Learning Services Staff:

The Learning Services Staff comprises several positions: Learning Assistance (LAC), Education Assistants (EA), Behaviour Support Workers (BSW), and First Nations Support Workers (FNSW). Some Choices students may also require academic support through the Learning Services department, which may include an LAC block, and/or EA, BSW or FNSW allocations. The Learning Services needs of Choices will be determined through collaboration of staff, administration and the Choices team and should be flexible enough to meet the changing needs of both students and teachers throughout the school year.

### Classroom Teachers:

The classroom teacher is an essential component of Choices. Students remain connected to their classroom teacher, with the ultimate goal of full reintegration back into the mainstream classroom. The classroom teacher's role includes:

- developing/applying appropriate adaptations (in both delivery and assessment) based on IEP goals and recommendations
- collaborating on a regular basis with Choices teacher, counsellors and Learning Services staff
- teaching to diversity and multiple intelligences
- utilizing appropriate instructional intelligences to engage students
- providing multiple pathways to learning using a variety of curriculum delivery methods
- providing curriculum, assessment and evaluation for students in all tiers of Choices
- applying adaptations in a non-judgmental manner with a focus and understanding of individual needs

### Grade Counsellors:

Counsellors provide both incidental and ongoing support for students who encounter academic and/or social/emotional/ behavioural difficulties during their secondary school experience. Their role within Choices may include:

- providing academic guidance and support through appropriate course selection and scheduling which could include partial programs or cross-enrollment to district programs or Distributed Learning
- acting as an advocate for Choices students with classroom teachers
- supporting the student and collaborating with the Choices team at the pre, during and post stages of Choices
- supporting the Choices team in determining and monitoring goals for the student
- liaison with parents
- initiating and following through with the Choices referral/intake process
- conducting file and IEP reviews in preparation for Choices referrals
- reviewing IEP goals and adaptations with classroom teachers
- co-case management with the Choices Teacher, Counsellor assigned to Choices or other school personnel where appropriate on a case-by-case basis to facilitate the design and implementation of IEPs, submit ministry identifications, and implement interministerial support plans



### Learning Assistance:

- review academic goals and adaptations with Choices staff and classroom teachers
- collaborate with Choices teacher and classroom teachers to update IEPs and write IEP progress reports
- provide support for Choices students in a scheduled LAC block if necessary
- case management of students where appropriate

### Educational Assistants and First Nation Support Workers (EA and FNSW):

- observing, documenting and recording information to support a behaviour assessment
- academic support in regular classrooms, focusing on adaptations, potentially one on one or in small groups
- implementing behaviour plans in regular classrooms
- working in the Choices classrooms for specific blocks based on student needs
- culture specific supports for Aboriginal students

### Work Experience Teacher (WEX):

The Work Experience Teacher, with the support of a WEX Facilitator, provides work experience placements for secondary students including those with special needs. They promote work experience programs in the community and recruit employer participants, organize work experience placements and support students and employers involved. The Work Experience Teacher interviews and places students in appropriate work experience placements according to their abilities, interests and skills. They also provide advice to students regarding interview and other necessary work-life skills. The Work Experience Teacher may also provide one-on-one pre-employment preparation and training and may assign Education Assistants to accompany students to work sites.

### Behaviour Support Worker (BSW):

- work under the direction of the FOS Leader or Counsellors as determined by School Administration and SBRT
- to provide interventions to support social/emotional learning for the wider student body
- take referrals from counsellors and administration
- observing, documenting and recording information which may support a behaviour assessment
- behaviour support in regular classrooms, focusing on adaptations, potentially one-on-one or in small groups for short term, high intensity interventions
- strategize with classroom teachers to implement behaviour plans
- work in the Choices classroom for occasional blocks based on student needs

## District Choices Support

### Family of Schools Leader:

The Family of Schools Leader will be involved in Choices based on student needs. They will play a key role in the elementary to secondary articulation process when transitioning students who may require Choices support. During this transition process, the Choices teacher should be included with the rest of the team that meets with the Family of Schools Leader. The Family of Schools leader will also be involved in SBRT meetings to contribute to student assessment and program planning.

### Choices District Administrator:

The primary role of the Choices District Administrator is to provide guidance and direction for Choices and provide consistency in practices, documentation, and vision for Choices among the six secondary school sites. Other responsibilities include:

- coordination of professional learning opportunities for Choices Teams
- work in collaboration with school based admin teams to oversee Choices teachers and YEW workers, including supervision and evaluation
- foster partnerships with Youth Outreach Workers and community agencies to meet the needs of Choices students
- annually review placement of teachers and YEW workers at each site
- liaison with mainstream administration teams
- liaison with Mountainside Secondary School
- attend school based SBRT/Choices Referral meetings as required
- attend Mountainside SBRT meetings
- attend and Chair District Resource Team meetings
- oversee the Choices district budget at each site

## Community Supports

### Youth Outreach Workers (YOWs):

YOWs are community based youth support workers. Youth Outreach Workers from North Shore Neighbourhood House, Parkgate Community Services Society and Capilano Community Services connect with students in the North Vancouver School District, usually outside of school hours. They are available to assist youth to learn skills to help them interact more positively at school, work and home. They also support youth through activities, workshops and programming around healthy living and making wise choices.

### Community Supports

The Choices team will need to work closely with a variety of community partners to assist in the provision of wrap around supports for students. Partnerships include the community based Youth Outreach Workers (YOW), Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD), Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH), Hollyburn Services and Pacific Legal Education Society (PLEA), etc. During the intake meeting for Choices, parents and youth will be informed of the potential necessity for information sharing about student needs and will be asked to agree to this as necessary and within the limits of confidentiality.

## Supporting Choices Students

### Community Supports

- Youth Outreach Worker (YOW)
- Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH)
- Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD)
- Hollyburn Services
- Pacific Legal Education Society (PLEA)

### District Choices Support

- Family of Schools Leader
- Choices District Administrator

### School Based Choices Support

- Site Based Administrator
- Classroom Teacher
- LAC Teacher
- Education Assistant
- Behaviour Support Worker
- Learning Services Staff
- Grade Counsellor
- First Nation Support Worker
- Work Experience Teacher

### Direct Choices Support

- Choices Teacher
- Counsellor Assigned to the Choices Program
- Youth Engagement Worker

Student

Parent/Guardian

## Confidentiality

Choices students will work closely with members of the Choices team and as such, it is likely that a relationship of trust will develop, where disclosures of a confidential nature may occur. Confidentiality is an agreement between people to **not** disclose information of a sensitive nature. During the intake process into Choices, students and parents will be asked to sign an informed consent document regarding confidentiality. This confidentiality has “limits” that will be reviewed with both the youth and their parents/guardians. Confidentiality must be broken if:

- the youth has intent to harm themselves or others
- the youth is being abused
- the youth has disclosed that a child or dependent adult is being abused
- in specific cases, confidentiality must be broken if ordered by the court

At times, and as determined by a clinical counsellor, it may be in the best interest of the youth to share the information with the appropriate school personnel to ensure that the necessary supports are put in place. These limits are consistent with the Child, Family and Community Services Act and School District 44 policies. Whenever possible, if a student indicates a need to disclose information, the youth should be referred to the trained clinical Counsellor assigned to Choices.

## GLOSSARY

**2004 Graduation Program:** outlines the required courses, Ministry examinations and credits required (80) to obtain a Dogwood Graduation Diploma in the Province of British Columbia.

**Adaptations:** Students requiring significant changes to instruction and assessment but course goals continue to be drawn from the Provincial Learning Outcomes (PLOs). Differentiated instruction is routinely part of planning for all students. Significant adaptations are outlined on an IEP e.g. use of readers, special technology, calculator. These adaptations are necessary for specific purposes as they allow the student to demonstrate learning in alternate ways.

**Adult Graduation Program:** outlines the required courses and credits required (20) to obtain an Adult Dogwood Graduation Diploma in the Province of British Columbia. Adult Graduation is open to students 18 years of age and older. Two required courses taken before the student turns 18 may be applied to the program. At least three courses must be taken after the student turns 18.

**Alternate Program Policy:** The BC Ministry of Education Alternate Program Policy outlines the guidelines, audit requirements and funding model for alternate programs. Alternate education provides support through differentiated instruction, personalized program delivery and enhanced counselling and community services. Students who attend alternate programs are most often the most vulnerable population in the school system.

**Alternate student:** students who are considered the most vulnerable and at risk population of the school community. Alternate education schools have disproportionate numbers of children and youth in care, aboriginal students, children and youth living in poverty or the street, gifted children who have difficulty in social situations, children and youth involved in drugs, alcohol and the sex trade and youth with mental health concerns.

**Anxiety:** covers four aspects of experiences an individual may have: mental apprehension, physical tension, physical symptoms and dissociative anxiety. Anxiety disorder is divided into generalized anxiety disorder, phobic disorder, and panic disorder; each has its own characteristics and symptoms and they require different treatment. The emotions present in anxiety disorders range from simple nervousness to bouts of terror.

**At-Risk Youth:** these are students who may have a variety of issues that potentially could interfere with their academic and personal success. Dysfunctional family situations, issues with drugs and alcohol, low self-esteem, poor attendance, lack of engagement with peers, a disconnect from school, or mental health issues can indicate that a student may be at-risk.

**Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder:** is a problem with inattentiveness, over-activity, impulsivity, or a combination. For these problems to be diagnosed as ADHD, they must be out of the normal range for a child's age and development.

**Behaviour Assessment:** is a process for gathering information that can be used to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of behavioural support. The process of gathering broad and specific information gives team members insight into the reasons why a student may engage in challenging behaviours.

**Behaviour Support Worker:** a member of the Learning Services team who focuses on behaviour management and supports classroom teachers with students who exhibit externalizing behaviours.

**Case Manager:** is a teacher/counsellor who is assigned to oversee a student's educational/behavioural program. Their role is to design, update and report on the IEP goals, and liaison and work in partnership with classroom teachers, parents, and outside agencies. Case management is assigned based on student needs, skill set of the case manager, and relationship with student and parent/guardian

**Choices:** is an in-school support for at-risk youth who may have multiple social/emotional barriers to learning. Choices is designed to be a fluid program that supports students to remain connected to their mainstream secondary school while still getting the social/emotional and behavioural support they require.

**Confidentiality:** an agreement between people to not disclose information of a sensitive nature that may have been shared. Limits to this include: harm to self or others, abuse, ordered by the court, as a means of providing further support.

**Counselling:** school counselling teams provide a continuum of services to support the social, emotional, behavioural, mental health and academic needs of students. Counsellors collaborate with teachers, parents and additional specialist personnel from other Ministry agencies to promote a consistency of support for students. Within this continuum, the counselling services include:

- Academic Advising: assisting students with course selection, graduation planning, career advising and applications to post-secondary institutions and trades programs. The role is usually divided up by grades
- Clinical Counselling: every school has at least one counsellor who has a minimum of a Master's Degree in Counselling Psychology and can provide clinical and therapeutic consultation and direct counselling to students with social, emotional, behavioural and mental health issues. These clinical counsellors will often case manage students with R and H designations and will typically be assigned as a "Choices Counsellor."

**Depression:** is a state of low mood and aversion to activity that can have a negative effect on a person's thoughts, behaviour, feelings, world view and physical well-being. Depressed people may feel sad, anxious, empty, hopeless, worried, helpless, worthless, guilty, irritable, hurt, or restless. They may lose interest in activities that once were pleasurable; experience loss of appetite or overeating; have problems concentrating, remembering details, or making decisions; and may contemplate, attempt, or even desire suicide. Insomnia, excessive sleeping, fatigue, loss of energy, or aches, pains or digestive problems may be present.

**District Resource Team:** The DRT is a problem-solving team comprised of a Director of Learning Services, the Choices District Administrator, the Principal of Mountainside Alternate Secondary School, and the Counsellor assigned to Mountainside Alternate Secondary School. The DRT provides recommendations to support students in their mainstream school through Choices, Learning Assistance and community supports, provides recommendations to support students transitioning to Mountainside Alternate Secondary School, and assists in the placement of at-risk youth from out of district to a mainstream secondary school or Mountainside Alternate Secondary school.

**Educational Assistant:** Education Assistants/Aides (EAs) work under the direction of a teacher to support the teacher to provide curriculum differentiation and supports to individual students or small groups of students.

**Elementary Articulation/Transition:** a meeting of specific elementary and secondary administrators, Special Education teachers, Secondary District counsellors, and Elementary counsellors to discuss the academic and social emotional needs of Grade 7 students transitioning to Grade 8.

**Evergreen Certificate:** The British Columbia School Completion Certificate is awarded to students who meet the goals of their educational program other than Dogwood graduation. This can include students with Individual Education Plans, or students who meet other criteria established by their Board of Education. School Completion Certificates are intended to recognize the accomplishments of students, including students with special needs, who have succeeded in meeting the goals of their educational program. They are provided to students who follow a fully modified program or to students who have a combination of both adapted and modified courses. The student transcript outlines specific courses followed.

**Family of Schools Leader:** the FOS Leader has a key leadership role in assisting with achieving high quality learning for students with special needs. This includes direct work within their own area of expertise, coordination of activities within a Family of Schools (FOS), and involvement in district-wide initiatives. FOS Leaders support Inclusive Special Education practices at both the elementary and secondary level.

**FIPPA:** Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) indicates that personal information may only be shared through informed consent.

**First Nations Support Worker:** a member of the school based Learning Services team who primary role is to connect and engage First Nations students in their academic and social/emotional learning with a focus on and respect for unique cultural needs and supports.

**Inclusive Education:** British Columbia promotes an inclusive education system in which students with special needs are fully participating members of a community of learners. Inclusion describes the principle that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs. The practice of inclusion is not necessarily synonymous with full integration in regular classrooms, and goes beyond placement to include meaningful participation and interaction with others.

**Individual Education Plan:** The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is used to summarize the assessment(s) and planned interventions for students with special needs. The IEP does not outline the entire curriculum for a student, but focuses on prioritized goals and objectives that are additional to or different from what most other students in the class may be doing. It is often the specialist teachers who are the case managers responsible for writing the IEPs.

**Learning Assistance Teacher/Learning Support Teacher:** LAC and LST teachers support students with IEPs who required additional supports beyond classroom adaptations. They work with students in a variety of designation areas (see Ministry Designations).

**Mainstream Secondary School:** six Secondary Schools in North Vancouver are considered "mainstream": Argyle, Carson, Handsworth, Seycove, Sutherland and Windsor. They are organized on a block rotation schedule, offer all required academic courses and a variety of elective opportunities. They have average student populations of 1,000.

**Ministry of Child and Family Development:** (MCFD) offers a wide range of programs and services to children, youth, parents, families, people with special needs, and those fighting addictions to ensure that healthy children and responsible families are living in safe, caring and inclusive communities.

**Ministry Designation:** defines the special needs category, based on specific criteria and assessment for students. Students involved in Choices may typically have an R or H or Q designation.

B	Deaf/Blind
C	Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disability
D	Physical Disability/Chronic Health Impairment
E	Visual Impairment
F	Deaf or Hard of Hearing
G	Autism
H	Students Requiring Intensive Behaviour Interventions or Students with Serious Mental Illness
K	Mild Intellectual Disability
P	Gifted
Q	Learning Disability
R	Students Requiring Moderate Behaviour Support or Students with Mental Illness

**Mountainside Secondary School:** located in the North Vancouver School District Learning Centre at 3665 Mahon Avenue. The school offers alternate programming to students in grades 9-12 who have met the criteria of an alternate student and have been referred to the school by the District Resource Team.

**School Based Resource Team:** the SBRT is a problem-solving team typically comprised of an administrator, specialist teachers, classroom teachers and counsellors who develop and implement instructional strategies and coordinate support for students with academic and social/emotional needs

**Social Emotional Learning:** is a process for learning life skills, including how to deal with oneself, others and relationships, and work in an effective manner. In dealing with oneself, SEL helps in recognizing our emotions and learning how to manage those feelings. In dealing with others, SEL helps with developing sympathy and empathy for others, and maintaining positive relationships. SEL also focuses on dealing with a variety of situations in a constructive and ethical manner.

**Special Education:** is the education of students with academic, cognitive, physical or social emotional issues that addresses the students' individual differences and needs. Ideally, this process involves the individually planned and systematically monitored arrangement of teaching procedures, adapted equipment and materials, accessible settings, and other interventions designed to help learners with special needs achieve a higher level of personal self-sufficiency and success in school and community than would be available if the student were only given access to a typical classroom education.

**Student Information System (BCeSIS):** is a system of data collection that tracks demographics, course selection, marks, report cards and other data pertinent to student learning and achievement.

**Vancouver Coastal Health:** is a health authority offering primary care, community-based residential and home health care, mental health and addiction services, public health services, hospital care and research.



### Work Experience Facilitator (WEX):

The Work Experience Facilitator works with the Careers teacher to provide work experience placements for secondary students including those with special needs. They promote work experience programs in the community and recruit employer participants, organize work experience placements and support students and employers involved. The Work Experience Facilitator interviews and places students in appropriate work experience placements according to their abilities, interests and skills. Working together with the Careers teacher and/or Special Education teacher they also provide advice to students regarding interview and other necessary work-life skills. The Work Experience Facilitator may also provide one-on-one pre-employment preparation and training and may accompany students to work site in order to provide a supported work placement by acting as the job coach when working with students with special needs.

**Youth Engagement Worker:** (YEW) is a member of the Learning Services team. They support students in Choices by providing academic and social/emotional/behavioural support and connecting students to community supports. The YEW works on a flexible schedule in order to design and implement after school programming for at risk youth as needed.

**Youth Outreach Workers (YOWs):** are community-based youth support workers. Youth Outreach Workers from North Shore Neighbourhood House, Parkgate Community Services Society and Capilano Community Services connect with students in the North Vancouver School District, usually outside of school hours.



## Important Websites/Document Links

Alternate Program Policy:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=592566EB80A94267996D6A058B5A1E24&title=Alternate%20Education%20Program%20>

Adult Graduation Policy:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=870A25D595CE4492B97DBEFB08F6EE6A&title=Adult%20Graduation%20Program>

2004 Graduation Policy:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=142C8F3C1BC44029A4713325F46BDBDE>

NVSD 44 Inclusive Education Handbook:

[http://www.nvsd44.bc.ca/en/Programs/~media/PDF\\_uploads/Programs/StudentServices/2011\\_12/Inclusive%20Education%202011%20Rev%20July%202012.ashx](http://www.nvsd44.bc.ca/en/Programs/~media/PDF_uploads/Programs/StudentServices/2011_12/Inclusive%20Education%202011%20Rev%20July%202012.ashx)

NVSD 44 Learning Assistance Handbook:

[http://www.nvsd44.bc.ca/en/Programs/~media/PDF\\_uploads/Programs/StudentServices/2011\\_12/Learning%20Assistance%20Handbook%20July%202012.ashx](http://www.nvsd44.bc.ca/en/Programs/~media/PDF_uploads/Programs/StudentServices/2011_12/Learning%20Assistance%20Handbook%20July%202012.ashx)

North Vancouver School District Strategic Plan 2011-2021:

[http://www.nvsd44.bc.ca/FlashFiles/StrategicPlan/ebook/content/NVSD\\_Strategic\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.nvsd44.bc.ca/FlashFiles/StrategicPlan/ebook/content/NVSD_Strategic_Plan.pdf)

North Vancouver 3 Year Operating Plan Presentation:

[http://www.nvsd44.bc.ca/Trustees/~media/PDF\\_uploads/BoardMeetings/2011\\_12/3YearOperatingPlanPresentation20111025R.ashx](http://www.nvsd44.bc.ca/Trustees/~media/PDF_uploads/BoardMeetings/2011_12/3YearOperatingPlanPresentation20111025R.ashx)

Special Education Policy:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=0859706D590E4842A1FBE045D398231C>