

ASCA Position Statements

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The School Counselor and Academic Development

(Adopted 2017; revised 2023)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors deliver school counseling programs that enhance student growth in three domain areas: academic, career, and social/emotional development. As a part of that program, school counselors implement strategies and activities to help each and every student enhance their academic development – the mindsets and behaviors students need to maximize their ability to learn – while recognizing that growth in all three domains is necessary for students to be successful now and later in life.

The Rationale

Federal initiatives such as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015) and state education accountability plans have stressed academic achievement as a measure of school success. As certified/licensed educators who improve student success for each and every student, school counselors align their school counseling program with the vision, mission, and goals of the school and district, emphasizing academic achievement. School counselors contribute to the educational and academic outcomes of the school by enhancing student engagement and performance (Akos et al., 2019; Shi & Brown, 2020) through designing, implementing and assessing school counseling programs (ASCA, 2019).

School counseling programs use data and data disaggregation to understand student needs and provide appropriate interventions. School counselors advocate and work to remove systemic barriers to ensure each and every student has the opportunity to achieve their academic goals at all grade levels reflecting their abilities and academic interests (Novakovic et al., 2020). School counselors use data-informed practices to ensure that each and every student can access appropriate, rigorous, relevant coursework and experiences. Because of their unique position within a school and their unique training, school counselors support students facing academic difficulties, mental health issues, family and social concerns, as well as career exploration and course planning to make school relevant.

School counselors play a critical role in ensuring schools provide a safe, caring environment and that students attain the necessary mindsets and behaviors to advance their academic achievement. School counselors work collaboratively with partners to ensure success for each and every student (ASCA, 2019).

The School Counselor's Role

In their efforts to enhance student academic development, school counselors:

- Work collaboratively with school staff to develop a safe, caring and inclusive school culture (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018)
- Design, implement and assess a school counseling program informed by disaggregated data identifying student needs
- Deliver information to students and teachers on best practices to attain mindsets and behaviors (i.e., learning strategies, self-management skills, social skills) for student success
- Provide relevance to students' academic effort and educational pursuits by helping them understand the connection between school and the world of work, assisting them in career planning and career-related goal setting
- Work with administrators, teachers and other school staff to create a school environment encouraging academic success and striving to one's full potential (Oehrtman, 2022; Oehrtman & Dollarhide, 2022)
- Encourage students to engage in challenging coursework and work to address and remove barriers to access the most rigorous coursework appropriate for each student
- Use disaggregated data to identify and address inequitable practices
- Provide opportunities for students to:
  - Enhance their belief in development of whole self and ability to succeed
  - Develop a positive attitude toward work and learning
  - Make decisions informed by evidence, considering others' perspectives and recognizing personal bias
  - Develop long and short-term academic goals
  - Demonstrate self-motivation and self-direction for learning
- Demonstrate positive, respectful and supportive relationships with students and adults (ASCA, 2021)
- Work to establish student opportunities for academic remediation as needed
- Emphasize family/caregiver-community-school relationships in addressing academic needs

Summary

Schools are evaluated on student outcomes, especially academic achievement, and school counselors play a critical role in ensuring schools create an environment conducive to academic success. School counselors provide a school counseling program that helps each and every student enhance their academic development to achieve and exceed high academic standards while recognizing that growth in all three domains of academic, career, and social/emotional development is necessary for students to be successful now and later in life.

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The School Counselor and Annual Performance Appraisal

(Adopted 1978; reaffirmed 1984; revised 1986, 1993, 2003, 2009, 2015; reviewed 1999; 2021; revised 2026)

ASCA Position

The annual performance appraisal of school counselors should accurately reflect the unique professional training and practices of school counselors working within a pre-K–12 school counseling program. These appraisals should be aligned to the role and responsibilities of the school counselors as articulated by ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies, the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors, the school counseling program assessment and the school counselor performance appraisal from the ASCA National Model®.

The Rationale

The overarching purpose of the school counselor performance appraisal is to enhance the positive impacts the school counselor and the school counseling program have on students' success. Feedback and collaboration in the performance appraisal process should be based on the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies to ensure school counselors "design, implement and assess a school counseling program that improves life-readiness and academic success for each and every student" (ASCA, 2025a, p. 1) and are engaging in appropriate school counseling duties.

Because many administrators have not received training on the ASCA National Model® and how to appraise school counselor performance, part of school counselor advocacy includes informing school administrators and other educational partners about the role of the school counselor and that of the school counseling program (ASCA 2025a; Dahir & Geesa, 2022; Sabella et al., 2023). The annual administrator conference, as described in the ASCA National Model®, is an essential practice to support the school counselor appraisal process. It ensures school counselors are better positioned to support student success in ways that align with appropriate school counselor roles and responsibilities (Dahir & Geesa, 2022; Geesa et al., 2023). Utilizing this process, there is a higher likelihood that the school counseling programs reflect the ASCA National Model® (Geesa et al., 2023; Kirk et al., 2025; Sabella et al., 2023) and that school counselors experience greater job satisfaction (Lee, 2025).

The School Counselor's Role

The role and responsibilities of the school counselor in pre-K-12 settings require that their performance is appraised in a manner that accounts for appropriate and professional school counseling duties (Beal, 2025).

The school counselor:

- Completes the annual administrator conference, in collaboration with their school administrators, and references it during the annual school counselor performance appraisal
- Consults with school administrators regarding ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies and advocates for its integration as a tool of the ASCA National Model® (Dahir & Geesa, 2022; Geesa et al., 2023) in the performance appraisal process
- Presents evidence of the school counseling program's impact including access, life-readiness and academic achievement data (ASCA 2025a)
- Collaborates with other school counselors, school administrators, district leadership, union representatives (as appropriate), departments of education, etc. to advocate for the alignment between the school counselor appraisal tool and appropriate school counseling roles (Geesa et al., 2023; Sabella et al., 2023; Young & Kaffenberger, 2018)

Summary

The annual performance appraisal of the school counselor, including the appraisal forms and tools used in the process, should reflect the current standards, competencies and the performance appraisal instruments of the school counseling profession.

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The School Counselor and Anti-Racist Practices

(Adopted 2021)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors work toward cultural competence and engage in anti-racist actions by advocating to change racist policies, procedures, practices, guidelines and laws contributing to inequities in students' academic, career and social/emotional development.

The Rationale

Racism remains a part of society in the United States and exists throughout all of our institutions. Unfortunately, the education system, as a subset of society, has contributed to the continuation of inequities specific to the school setting (LaForett & De Marco, 2020). The U.S. education system contributes to maintaining systems of oppression through racist policies, practices and guidelines that negatively affect all students but especially students from racially diverse backgrounds, including Black and Indigenous students, who historically have been distinctly affected by white supremacy in the United States (Steward, 2019). By supporting anti-racist policies through their actions and expressed anti-racist ideas, school counselors embrace their roles as social justice advocates and change agents who examine and dismantle systems of oppression (Kendi, 2019). It is essential for school counselors to engage in these leadership roles to address issues within education that promote inequity in achievement, access and opportunity, specifically for students from racially diverse backgrounds.

The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016) call for school counselors to be systemic change agents who embrace their roles as advocates, leaders and collaborators by providing "equitable educational access and success" (p.1). All educators, especially school counselors, have an obligation to work toward mitigating and/or ending racism and bias (ASCA, 2020) in an effort to lessen the impact of systemic racism on student development. Kohli et. al (2017) recognized the gaps in research related to the mechanisms (policies and procedures) of racial oppression in education. Still today these gaps exist, underscoring the need for school counselors to be intentional in examining and exploring data that uncovers disproportionality and racial inequities. To actively dismantle racist policies, procedures and practices within education, school counselors must embrace their ethical responsibilities within roles as social justice advocates, leaders and change agents to ensure each and every student, specifically students from racially diverse backgrounds, develop in healthy and successful ways in their academic, career and social/emotional development.

The School Counselor's Role

The role of the school counselor in ensuring anti-racist practices is to enhance awareness, obtain culturally responsive knowledge and skills, and engage in action through advocacy. As such, school counselors are called to:

Awareness/Reflection

- Reflect regularly on their cultural worldviews (values, beliefs, assumptions, biases), seeking to understand how these views influence their practice
- Engage in the personal work necessary to identify and acknowledge blind spots, uncover and mitigate the influence of all biases, particularly implicit biases, and act for real change
- Initiate and/or participate in "courageous conversations" that move to discomfort on topics of injustice, racism, privilege, oppression and related issues
- Reflect on feelings and sources of personal resistance that might arise in exploring topics of racism, privilege, oppression, marginalization and bias

Knowledge/Skills

- Participate regularly in school/district, independent and community-based professional development opportunities (ASCA, 2021)
- Consult and collaborate with people and organizations representative of the communities their schools serve
- Participate in supervision to obtain and refine culturally competent delivery and programmatic skills

- Engage in personal study of institutional and systemic racism in credible sources of research such as peer-reviewed journal articles and other scholarly literature
- Consult with professionals and community representatives to identify and engage in immersive experiences focused on obtaining knowledge and understanding in honoring cultures, languages, and traditions (Levy & Adjapong, 2020)

Action/Advocacy

School counselors work to end racism and bias by applying school counseling standards in practice (ASCA, 2020), such as:

- Collect and report data exposing inequitable outcomes
- Deliver lessons in classroom, small-group or individual settings that teach the ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success and address racism and bias
- Recognize and respond to incidents of racism and bias among students and staff
- Collaborate with families, educators, businesses and community organizations focused on anti-racism/bias
- Serve on school/district committees focused on anti-racism/bias, including committees addressing academic content
- Present workshops for parents/families on how to foster and support respectful student behaviors
- Lead efforts to challenge policies, procedures, practices, traditions or customs perpetuating intentional or unintentional racist and biased behaviors and outcomes (ASCA, 2021)
- Advocate for policies, practices and guidelines to dismantle racism and bias and promote success for each and every student
- Advocate for school counseling program resources and practices that acknowledge students from racially diverse backgrounds, and provide equitable opportunities for increased access to resources and support systems (ASCA, 2021)
- Advocate for and present anti-racism professional development opportunities within schools, districts and professional associations (ASCA, 2021)
- Advocate for change in policies, practices and procedures that have historically marginalized and oppressed groups, resulting in injustice, disproportionate outcomes, bias and the perpetuation of racist policies
- Provide appropriate services and supports for students from racially diverse backgrounds and their families who may demonstrate symptoms of racial trauma as a result of racist policies and practices (Atkins & Oglesby, 2019)
- Advocate for learning materials and resources in all content areas promoting diversity and inclusion, addressing ways students from racially diverse backgrounds have been harmed and oppressed, and considering the impact white supremacy and inequitable learning opportunities continue to have on American and global societies (Atkins & Oglesby, 2019)

Summary

School counselors continually work toward cultural competence and address racism and bias through the implementation of a school counseling program. Guided by the ASCA National Model (2019), school counselors shape ethical, equitable and inclusive school environments. School counselors engage in self-reflection, develop knowledge and skills, and advocate for the equitable treatment of each and every student through action to address broader issues of systemic and institutional racism. They seek to address policies, practices and guidelines contributing to the inequities experienced by students from racially diverse backgrounds in the pre-K–12 setting.

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AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

The School Counselor and Bullying/Harassment Prevention and the Promotion of Safe Schools

(Adopted 1994/2000; Revised 2005, 2011, 2016, 2022)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors recognize the impact a safe and caring environment has on student achievement and social/emotional development. To foster a positive school climate, school counselors work to identify and remove systemic barriers that hinder a safe and caring school environment and culture. School counseling programs promote anti-bullying, anti-harassment and violence-prevention programs, schoolwide positive behavior interventions and support, along with comprehensive conflict-resolution programs to foster a positive school climate.

The Rationale

Promoting a positive school climate and developing positive relationships with caring adults is key to improving school success and reducing bullying, harassment and excessive disciplinary problems (DeVoogd, Lane-Garon, & Kralowec, 2016). Education partners recognize the need to provide a safe school climate, which leads to increased student achievement and decreased discipline (Mapp & Bergman, 2019). Incidents threatening student and staff safety include bullying, harassment, violence, weapons or gang behavior (Ercek & Birel, 2021).

Prevention activities are integral to creating a safe school environment free of fear, bullying, harassment and violence. Delivered by school counselors, teachers, administrators, student support personnel and qualified community experts, prevention programs increase the opportunity for improved academic achievement, appropriate behavior, positive relationships, successful conflict resolution, safe school climate and increased attendance (London & Standeven, 2017). Participating in prevention activities empowers and encourages students to work in collaboration with their school and community in creating a safe school environment and culture.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors collaborate with others in the school and community to promote safe schools and confront issues threatening school safety. School counselors encourage the development of local policies supporting a safe school environment, and they provide leadership to the school by assisting in the design and implementation of schoolwide prevention activities and programs. School counselors also advocate for state and national policies supporting these efforts. Additionally, school counselors recognize differentiated interventions are needed for bullying and resolving conflicts. Comprehensive anti-bullying/anti-harassment/violence-prevention and conflict-resolution programs require data-informed decision-making, coordination, instruction and program assessment. These programs are most effective when incorporated into the academic curriculum by all members of the school community (Irwin, et. al, 2021). The school counselor includes prevention programs as part of the school counseling program and ensures these programs include training in key areas for peacefully resolving issues such as:

- communication skills
- conflict-resolution skills
- decision-making skills
- development of cultural competence
- acceptance of differences
- intervention strategies for bullying/harassment
- recognition of early warning signs of violence
- prevention/intervention services
- appropriate use of technology and social media
- community involvement
- parent/guardian and faculty/staff education
- assessment of program effectiveness
- positive staff and student relationships
- mental health awareness training
- bystander training (e.g., QPR, SOS)

Summary

School counselors understand the positive effects of a safe and caring school environment. Through participation in prevention programs and activities aimed at anti-bullying, anti-harassment and violence prevention, school counselors foster opportunities for students to learn communication, problem solving and conflict resolution skills that help them achieve their goals and establish successful relationships. School counselors collaborate with teachers, instructional support personnel, administrators, families and the community to deliver prevention programs encouraging student growth and achievement and ensuring a safe school climate.

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The School Counselor and Career Development

(Adopted 2017; revised 2023, 2024)

Note: This statement combines The School Counselor and Career Development and The School Counselor and Career and Technical Education statements into one statement.

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors deliver school counseling programs that enhance student growth in three domain areas: academic, career and social/emotional development. As part of that program, school counselors implement strategies and activities to help each and every student enhance their career development – the mindsets and behaviors students need to understand the connection between school and the world of work, plan for and make a successful transition to postsecondary education, and work across the lifespan – while recognizing that growth in all three domains is necessary for students to be successful now and later in life.

The Rationale

As part of a school counseling program, school counselors provide resources and opportunities that help students explore their strengths and interests as well as career fields aligned with these attributes. These efforts help students plan for and choose postsecondary pathways and create opportunities for students to develop college- and career-readiness skills that help them successfully navigate postsecondary education and the world of work.

School counselors recognize that each student, regardless of background, possesses unique interests, abilities and goals, which will lead to future opportunities. By including culturally responsive practices within career development strategies, school counselors help historically marginalized populations create pathways for their future (Chan, 2019). Collaborating with students, families, educational staff and the community, school counselors work to ensure each and every student selects a postsecondary path to productive citizenry (e.g., military, career technical certificate or two-/four-year degree program) appropriate for the student.

School counselors recognize career education begins in kindergarten and is exemplified by students who are knowledgeable about options and are prepared to enroll and succeed in postsecondary experiences without the need for remediation. Best practice indicates that career technical education (CTE) activities should begin at least by middle school to assist with postsecondary planning and academic motivation (Bottoms, 2022). Engagement in hands-on activities increases student motivation in school as students make tangible connections in their classroom learning to the "real world" (Bottoms, 2022).

Middle and high school students fluctuate in their ways of thinking, their respective interests and their wants; hence, exposure to various options and careers further supports their growth (Bottoms, 2022). As facilitators of student learning of career options, school counselors familiarize students with CTE pathways and hands-on training, which can be critical to students' career development (ACTE, 2023).

School counselors also recognize each and every student possesses the skills and knowledge needed to qualify for and succeed in their chosen field (Mau & Li, 2018). It is important to note that exposure to all pathways should not come at the expense of limiting students to one option. CTE should be one of the multiple options shared with students (Cashdollar, 2023).

The School Counselor's Role

In their efforts to enhance students' career development, school counselors:

- Introduce students to careers and the world of work beginning in elementary grades (pre-K–3)
- Produce developmentally and age-appropriate connections to the world of work
- Collaborate to provide learning and experiential opportunities for students to acquire behaviors and skills necessary for career readiness (Limberg et al., 2021)
- Work with students to identify their interests, abilities, specific career clusters (Cicco, 2018) and postsecondary plans
- Help students plan the transition from school to postsecondary education and/or the world of work, including high-quality CTE programs (ASCA, 2021)

- Advise students on multiple postsecondary pathways (e.g., college, career- specific credentials and certifications, apprenticeships, military, service-year programs, full-time employment with a family-supporting wage or with a sufficient wage for sustaining an independent lifestyle)
- Connect students to early-college and career development programs (e.g., dual credit/dual enrollment, AP, IB, CTE)
- Collaborate with administrators, teachers, staff and decision-makers to create a postsecondary-readiness, career-preparedness and college-going culture
- Provide and advocate for each and every student's college and career awareness through exploration and postsecondary planning and decision-making, which supports students' right to choose from the wide array of options after completing secondary education
- Identify gaps in college and career access and the implications of such data for addressing both intentional and unintentional biases related to college and career advising and counseling
- Work with teachers to integrate career education learning in classroom lessons, including CTE pathways and relevant courses
- Provide opportunities for each and every student to develop learning strategies, self- management skills and social skills leading to a positive attitude toward learning, a strong work ethic and an understanding that lifelong learning is necessary for long-term career success
- Engage in professional development addressing career trends
- Practice self-reflection and growth involving traditional career roles and expand equity and access through that growth

Summary

School counselors provide resources and opportunities that help students explore their strengths and interests as well as career fields that might align with these attributes. School counselors provide a school counseling program that helps each and every student enhance their career development and successfully navigate postsecondary education and the world of work, while recognizing that growth in all three domains of academic, career and social/emotional development is necessary for students to be successful now and later in life. School counselors ensure that students have access to explore all postsecondary options, including CTE pathways.

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AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

The School Counselor and Character Education

(Adopted 1998; Revised 2005, 2011, 2016, 2022)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors cultivate students' character development by integrating character education programs into their school counseling program. The school counselor endorses and promotes the infusion of character education in the school curriculum by fostering participation of the entire school community.

The Rationale

Character education involves "the embodiment of multidimensional virtues as the core component of human moral functioning" (Brunsdon & Walker, 2021, p.3). The school counselor understands that teaching universal virtues that help people live and work together promotes healthy student development and academic achievement through reduced problem behavior, lower discipline rates and improvement in student self-concept (Brunsdon & Walker, 2021, Parker, et. al, 2010).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors, along with teachers, administrators, family and the community, share the responsibility of teaching character education virtues. School counselors encourage character education activities by means of:

- developing a school philosophy and school mission statement supporting positive character development
- establishing positive family-school-community partnerships
- implementing school counseling activities and strategies that promote positive character development while helping each and every student develop clear academic, career and social/emotional goals
- advocating for discipline policies that nurture the development of appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes
- utilizing proactive counseling methods that reinforce character education and lead to an increase in positive school climate
- encouraging student participation in extracurricular activities that include the involvement of students, school staff, parents/guardians and community members
- teaching skills in decision-making, conflict resolution, leadership and problem solving
- teaching communication etiquette in the technological world
- involving students in the development of school rules
- integrating multicultural competence and diversity appreciation into activities and strategies
- developing student recognition programs focused on character traits involving families and communities in the character education program

School counselors collaborate with teachers, administrators, families and the community to teach and model behaviors that enhance each student's academic, career and social/emotional development essential to making appropriate, healthy decisions.

Summary

Character education helps students achieve academic, career and social/emotional development goals to become positive contributors to society. The school counselor provides leadership and collaborates with teachers, administrators and the school community to promote character education for each and every student as an integral part of school curriculum and activities.

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The School Counselor and Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention

(Adopted 1981; revised 1985, 1993, 1999, 2003, 2015, 2021)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

It is the school counselor's legal, ethical and moral responsibility to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to the proper authorities. School counselors work to identify the behavioral, academic and social/emotional impact of abuse and neglect on students and ensure the necessary supports for students are in place.

The Rationale

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (2021) notes that most states recognize four major types of maltreatment: "neglect, physical abuse, psychological maltreatment and sexual abuse" (n.p.) and also points to medical neglect and sex trafficking as other forms of abuse identified by some states. The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, 2021) indicates the incidents of child abuse and neglect continue to be a significant concern. Child abuse and neglect is a public mental health issue that must be addressed through intervention and advocacy. A child who is a victim of abuse or neglect may experience consequences including, but not limited to, immediate physical, emotional or psychological harm; future victimization or perpetration; substance abuse; lower self-worth; and lower educational attainment.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors are among those mandated by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974, Public Law 93-247 to report suspected abuse and neglect to proper authorities and are critical in early detection and recognition of abuse. It is imperative that school counselors gain essential knowledge of policies and referral procedures by staying current on reporting requirements and state laws. Laws and definitions pertaining to child abuse and neglect vary among states; therefore, school counselors should commit themselves to become familiar with and abide by child protective services laws in their respective state (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, 2021b).

In addition to mandated reporting, school counselors:

- Understand child abuse and neglect and its impact on children's academic, career and social/emotional development
- Provide interventions promoting resiliency, healthy interpersonal and communication skills and self-worth
- Make referrals to outside agencies when appropriate
- Engage families in the school community
- Identify barriers and limitations that affect healthy family functioning and may lead to child abuse or neglect
- Identify instances of child abuse and neglect and respond on both individual and systemic levels
- Provide professional development in consultation on child abuse to school staff, families and the school community

School counselors serve as child advocates (ASCA, 2019), recognizing and understanding the problem, knowing the reporting procedures and participating in available child abuse information programs. School counselors play an integral role in helping promote child welfare by providing direct and indirect student services. Those services include advocating for students' needs by addressing issues that could affect their academic, career and social/emotional development.

Summary

School counselors are a key link in the child abuse prevention network. School counselors are responsible for reporting suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. School counselors must be able to guide and assist abused and neglected students by providing appropriate services. School counselors are committed to providing high-quality services, with research-based intervention techniques, to children who are victims of abuse and neglect.

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The School Counselor and College Access Professionals

(Adopted 2016; Revised 2022)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors play a critical role in preparing each and every student for lifelong learning and success. To ensure students have the opportunity to reach their full potential, school counselors collaborate and consult with community-based organizations, including college access organizations and college access professionals, within the framework of a school counseling program.

The Rationale

Implementation of a school counseling program involves working collaboratively with community-based organizations, including college access organizations and college access professionals, to help meet students' academic and career development needs. Community-based organizations often have expertise and time to work with historically marginalized populations and should be part of the total communitywide approach to postsecondary education.

Community-based organizations can provide tremendous value to the work school counselors do in the context of improving school-based programs and student achievement. The Council of National School Counseling and College Access Organizations, in collaboration with ASCA, acknowledges, the various professions that play a role in facilitating the process of aiding students in their postsecondary endeavors (Richardson, et al., 2022). College access professionals often include school counselors, college advisors, professional/trained mentors, career advisors and other specialists trained to serve students in navigating their college and career pathway.

Clear agreements between the school and the college access professional or community-based organization should be in place. The agreements should outline:

- a definition and delineation of functions and responsibilities of the college access professional, with particular focus on the limitations college access professionals must have in students' social/emotional developmental needs
- clear language stating the college access professionals' role is in support of the work of the school counselor rather than a replacement for the role/function of the school counselor
- a list of the student records or personal information college access professionals can access
- expectations that college access professionals must maintain the highest level of confidentiality related to student records or personal information
- the responsible supervisory entity for the college access professional, which includes a statement indicating the need for college access professionals to make referrals to this entity in the event students present issues beyond the scope of their college access training and skills
- the responsible compensation entity

College access professionals can be employed by schools, housed in school facilities or be based in off-campus facilities. School counselors serve as a catalyst in building collaborative partnerships with college access professionals, identifying community needs in college access and assisting in the identification of students/student groups who would benefit from the expertise and time provided by college access professionals (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2012, Bryan et al., 2017). Benefits from this collaboration may include:

- increased postsecondary attainment rates, particularly among low-income and marginalized student populations (Perna, 2015)
- mentoring opportunities, individualized needs-based services and academic remediation to help students access postsecondary opportunities
- opportunities for students to enroll in postsecondary courses or programs to prepare for postsecondary education
- partnerships with college access programs, scholarship programs, the Department of Education and mentoring services that raise awareness of the importance of postsecondary training

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors understand that partnerships are an integral component of college readiness (Bryan et al., 2017). As such, collaborative partnerships are defined as community-based organizations within the framework of a school counseling program. School counselors actively seek to assist students in preparing for postsecondary success. Through collaboration and consultation with college access professionals, school counselors can increase the scope of their work and provide communitywide benefits within a school counseling program approach by:

- initiating and sustaining conversations regarding community needs with community partners
- planning a communitywide response to college preparation and access
- setting communitywide goals and action plans for college access
- sharing common data with community partners

implementing collaborative interventions in college access

- helping students complete the steps necessary for participating in college access programs or postsecondary programs, such as registering for tests or applying for financial aid
- referring/nominating students for programs

Summary

School counselors can promote college access by fostering family and community-based partnerships that focus on access, knowledge sharing and the creation of college opportunities for K–12 students. College access organizations and professionals can provide beneficial academic and career opportunities for students by extending the reach of school counseling programs. Effective collaborations include a clear delineation of function and roles. School counselors are the catalyst for establishing the collaborative partnerships that help students receive these benefits.

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The School Counselor and Confidentiality

(Adopted 1974; reviewed and reaffirmed 1980; revised 1986, 1993, 1999, 2002, 2008, 2014, 2018, 2024)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors recognize their primary obligation regarding confidentiality is to the student and balance that obligation with an understanding of legal rights of parents/guardians to be the guiding voice in their children's lives.

The Rationale

Students have a right to be treated with dignity and respect and a right to privacy that is honored to the greatest extent possible (ASCA, 2022). The school counselor is responsible for fully respecting a student's right to privacy and for providing an atmosphere of trust and confidence (ASCA, 2022).

Confidentiality is the ethical term ascribed to the information communicated within the counseling relationship. The school counselor has an ethical obligation to keep information obtained within the counseling relationship confidential unless legal requirements or school board policy demand confidential information be revealed or a breach is required to prevent serious and foreseeable harm to the student or others.

Serious and foreseeable harm is different for each minor in schools and is determined by multiple factors, including a student's developmental and chronological age, the setting, parental/guardian rights and the nature of the harm. School counselors consult with appropriate professionals when in doubt as to the validity of an exception to confidentiality (ASCA, 2022).

Exceptions to confidentiality exist. School counselors should inform students when situations arise in which school counselors have a responsibility to disclose information obtained in counseling for the protection of students, themselves or other individuals. When faced with a potential need to breach confidentiality, school counselors should use an ethical decision-making model to determine potential courses of action and their consequences before proceeding (ASCA, 2022).

Privileged communication between a school counselor and a student is a legal term granting protection to information shared in a counseling relationship only if said privilege is granted by federal or state statute. If privilege applies, it can provide additional safeguards to confidential information. It is essential for school counselors to stay informed about evolving state laws concerning parent/guardian rights and student confidentiality to effectively navigate and uphold legal and ethical standards in their practice.

The School Counselor's Role

The role of the school counselor regarding confidentiality is to:

- Support the students' right to privacy and protect confidential information received from students, families and staff members
- Explain the meaning and limits of confidentiality to students in developmentally appropriate terms
- Provide appropriate disclosure and informed consent regarding counseling and confidentiality
- Seek consultation with other school-based mental health professionals and/or administrators when determining if and when to breach student confidentiality (Stone, 2022)
- Ensure school faculty and administration are aware of the parameters of school counselor confidentiality
- Inform students and families of the limits to confidentiality when:
  - the student poses a danger to self or others
  - the student is being harmed by someone else
  - there is a court-ordered disclosure
  - the school counselor consults with other professionals, such as colleagues, supervisors, treatment teams and other support personnel, in support of the student
  - privileged communication is not granted by state laws and local guidelines (e.g., school board policies)
  - the student participates in group counseling
  - substance use and treatment are concerns (CFR 42, Part 2; 2017)

- Keep personal notes separate from educational records and not disclose their contents except when privacy exceptions exist
- Seek guidance from supervisors and appropriate legal advice when their records are subpoenaed
- Communicate highly sensitive student information via face-to-face contact or phone call and not by e-mail or insertion into the educational record
- Request to a court of law that a student's anonymity be used if records are subpoenaed
- Be aware of federal, state and local security standards related to electronic communication, software programs and stored data
- Advocate for security-level protocols within student information systems allowing only certain staff members access to confidential information
- Assert their belief that information shared by students is confidential and should not be revealed without the student's consent
- Adhere to all school board policy and federal and state laws regarding confidentiality, student records, and special services (e.g., FERPA, IDEA)
- Exercise caution and sensitivity when legally or ethically bound to breach confidentiality in an effort to advocate for the student's well-being and preserve the student/school counselor relationship
- Inform the student prior to the disclosure if possible
- Collaborate with students to honor their autonomy and input as to how the disclosure occurs as much as developmentally appropriate

Summary

The relationship between students and their school counselor requires an atmosphere of trust and confidence. However, students should be informed that exceptions to confidentiality exist in which school counselors must inform others of information they obtained in the counseling relationship. Breaches to confidentiality are necessary to prevent serious and foreseeable harm to students or others and to adhere to legal requirements, including state and local laws as well as school district policies. School counselors work to advocate for policies and practices that prioritize and protect student confidentiality, ensuring a safe and trusting environment for each and every student.

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The School Counselor and Corporal Punishment

(Adopted 1995, Revised 2000, 2006, 2012, 2019, 2025)

ASCA Position

Corporal punishment adversely affects children and adolescents' physical well-being, mental health and social/emotional development. School counselors oppose the use of corporal punishment and advocate for trauma-informed discipline policies and procedures.

The Rationale

Even though corporal punishment has been on a steady decline since the 1970s and has notable negative effects, it is still legal in 17 states and used in 14 (Greene-Santos, 2024). The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (n.d.) defines corporal punishment as "any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light."

School counselors recognize the use of corporal punishment at home and/or at school is linked to negative outcomes in academic performance and problematic behaviors (Grogan-Kaylor, 2020; Maiti, 2021). Research shows physical punishment to be ineffective in teaching new behaviors, and it is detrimental in teaching problem-solving skills. A review of the literature (Afifi et al., 2022; Duong, et al., 2021; Zolotor et al., 2020) reinforces earlier findings that corporal punishment:

- Increases antisocial behaviors, such as lying, stealing, bullying and aggression. Heightens the risk of child abuse, as physical discipline may escalate in severity
- Erodes trust between students and authority figures, creating unsafe and ineffective learning environments
- Hinders cognitive development and academic performance
- Contributes to negative mental health outcomes, including depression, anxiety and long-term emotional dysregulation
- Contradicts trauma-informed approaches, which emphasize safety, empowerment and resilience

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors have a responsibility to protect students and to promote healthy student development using multitiered system of supports that incorporate evidence-based practices, including teaching new behaviors that promote positive social/emotional development (ASCA, 2019). School counselors are in an optimal position to implement proactive strategies that promote positive behaviors and respect diverse cultural values. Recognizing cultural influences on views of corporal punishment, the school counselor serves as a resource for school personnel and families by advocating for effective intervention and alternative discipline strategies. School counselors follow the laws and policies of their jurisdictions while being mindful of ethical standards. They can encourage public awareness of the consequences of corporal punishment, provide strategies on alternatives to corporal punishment and encourage legislation prohibiting the continued use of corporal punishment.

School counselors collaborate with families, educators and community partners to develop healthy relationships between students and adults. While school counselors do not implement disciplinary practices, they are aware that alternatives to corporal punishment can include:

- Implementing behavioral contracts to support self-regulation and accountability
- Establishing clear and consistent expectations with logical consequences for misconduct
- Facilitating conferences with students, families and staff to address underlying issues
- Encouraging pro-social behaviors through restorative practices, skills-based learning in mediation and conflict resolution
- Promoting emotional regulation and mindfulness practices to support student well-being
- Connecting families with parenting programs that encourage positive reinforcement and effective discipline

Summary

Research shows corporal punishment increases students' antisocial behavior, adversely affects cognitive development and erodes the trust between children and adults. It is ineffective in teaching new and positive behaviors and is detrimental in teaching appropriate problem-solving methods. School counselors oppose the use of corporal punishment and advocate for alternative methods to be used at home and school.

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AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

The School Counselor and Credentialing and Licensure

(Adopted 1990; revised 1993, 1999, 2003, 2009, 2015, 2021, 2026)

ASCA Position

Effective school counselor credentialing or licensing laws include a definition of the profession, minimum qualifications for entry into the profession and requirements for continuing professional development. All state education certification or licensure agencies are encouraged to adopt the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies when developing policy and legislation regarding school counselor credentialing or licensing.

The Rationale

Credentialing and licensure ensure school counselors are equipped with the knowledge, attitudes and skills to effectively support each and every student. These requirements ultimately protect students by ensuring access to highly qualified and trained professionals who can deliver comprehensive, ethical and data-informed services. Credentialing or licensure legislation should include:

- A description of the role of the school counselor as defined in the ASCA National Model® (ASCA, 2025a) and the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies (ASCA, 2025b)
- Standards for entry into the profession that require, at minimum, a master's degree in school counseling or the substantial equivalent
- Standards for school counselor preparation programs aligned with the ASCA Standards for School Counselor Preparation Programs (ASCA, 2019)
- Reasonable and relevant requirements for continuing education to further develop skills as a school counselor

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors must be professionally credentialed or licensed in the state in which they practice. School counselors work with state school counselor associations, school counselor preparation program and legislative bodies to advocate for alignment of credentialing or licensing requirements (Carey, et al., 2019) with the ASCA Professional Standards & Competencies for School Counselors. All school counselors are expected to:

- Be culturally competent (Verdon, 2020; Uher, Fisher & Josol, 2024)
- Have skills in evidence-based educational and school counseling practices (Zyromski, et al., 2018)
- Focus on the ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success, including K–12 college- and career-readiness standards for each and every student, with specific attention to academic, career and social/emotional needs (Yulis Mardotilla, et al., 2024; ASCA, 2025a)
- Possess leadership and advocacy skills (Gilfillan, et al., 2026)
- Engage in professional development to maintain credentials and licensure to stay current with best practices in school counseling
- Have consultation skills and the ability to work collaboratively with educational professionals and partners in the school and community (Brigman, et al., 2021)
- Be able to develop, implement and assess school counseling programs using data-informed processes (Warren & Mauck, 2019)
- Be able to identify systemic factors affecting the school counseling program and advocate for improvement (Kratsa et al., 2023)

School counselors collaborate with district and state education personnel and local or state school counselor associations to provide ongoing professional development specifically for school counselors, aligned with the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies (ASCA, 2025b).

Summary

Effective state school counselor credentialing/licensing laws and regulations align with the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies to ensure highly qualified and trained school counselors.

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The School Counselor and Cultural Diversity

(Adopted 1988; revised 1993, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2015, 2021)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors have a professional and ethical responsibility to expand personal multicultural and social justice advocacy, awareness, knowledge and skills to be an effective, culturally competent school counselor. School counselors work toward cultural competence and cultural humility to provide culturally sustaining school counseling. School counselors demonstrate responsiveness by collaborating with students and education partners in support of a school and community climate that embraces cultural diversity and helps to promote academic, career and social/emotional development for each and every student.

The Rationale

Diversity is a "range of cultures and subcultures that represent attitudes, beliefs, values, rituals, symbols, norms and conventions, customs, behaviors and ideologies" (Stone & Dahir, 2016, p. 294). Culture is a powerful and pervasive influence on the attitudes and behaviors of students, education partners and school counselors. In response to cultural diversification in schools and communities, school counselors must be more globally responsive and culturally sustaining in the educational and social environment than ever before.

As a part of this charge, school counselors need to continue to enhance knowledge and awareness of prejudice, power and various forms of oppression and utilize culturally responsive skills to support ever-changing student needs (ASCA Ethical Standards, B.3.i, 2016). In support of students, school counselors implement "equitable academic, career and social/emotional developmental opportunities for each and every student" (ASCA Ethical Standards, 2016, A.3.b.). It is an "expectation, not the exception" for school counselors to integrate multiculturalism and social justice perspectives into their work as advocates and leaders (Ratts and Greenleaf, 2017, p.8).

The School Counselor's Role

The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016) and a "host of voices in school counseling literature point to school counselor advocacy as a key factor in making progress toward this vision of equitable schools and communities. Our vision for equitable, inclusive and culturally sustaining schools can inform our advocacy goals as people and as professionals" (Grothaus, et al., 2020, p. 26).

School counselors can provide culturally responsive counseling by:

- exploring their personal knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about working with diverse student populations
- ensuring each student has access to a school counseling program that advocates for each and every student in diverse cultural groups
- addressing the impact poverty and social class have on student achievement
- identifying the impact of family culture upon student performance
- delivering culturally sensitive instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling
- ensuring each and every student's rights are respected and needs are met
- consulting and collaborating with education partners to create a school climate that welcomes and appreciates the strengths and gifts of culturally diverse students
- using data to measure access to programs and to close disproportionate gaps in opportunity, information and resources that affect achievement among diverse student populations (Henfield et al., 2014)
- enhancing their own cultural competence and facilitating the cultural awareness, knowledge and skills of all school personnel (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2017; Ratts, et al., 2015)

A culturally sustaining school counseling program includes a school counseling program advisory council that incorporates diverse perspectives and has representation reflecting the school's cultural census. Advisory councils can support the school counseling program in the development of goals, culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy. and strategic planning, as well as community bridging, awareness and advocacy (Grothaus, et al., 2020).

Summary

School counselors implement a culturally sustaining school counseling program that creates systematic change through growth, self-awareness, humility, knowledge of worldviews and cultural identities. School counselors collaborate with all education partners to provide relevant interventions and strategies that advocate for and promote social justice for each and every student. Through their school counseling programs, school counselors are positioned to actively become a part of the solution where cultural diversity is fully embraced in schools.

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The School Counselor and Student Safety with Digital Technologies

(Adopted 2000, revised 2006, 2012, 2017, 2023)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Digital technology (e.g. cell phones/mobile devices, gaming platforms, social media, and the internet) is a useful tool in creating developmental learning opportunities to enhance the student academic, career, and social/emotional development of each and every student. School counselors educate students and families about responsible use, digital citizenship, cultural, ethical, and legal considerations and collaborate with families, educators and law enforcement officials to alert students to risks technology poses.

The Rationale

To be successful in school and within their relationships and prepared for postsecondary opportunities, students need to be proficient in and aware of the use of interactive digital technology (ASCA, 2021). However, when students access social media, gaming platforms and interactive digital technology, they leave a digital footprint that makes them vulnerable to significant risks that compromise their safety, security and reputation (Gallo et al., 2018; Su et al., 2021). Technology exposes students to behavioral, safety and privacy risks, such as:

- Cyberbullying/harassment
- Invasion of privacy and disclosure of personal information
- Inappropriate online communications
- Access to inappropriate content and media
- Sexual predators and human trafficking
- Addictions to cell phone use, gaming, social media and/or the internet

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors have a responsibility to promote healthy student development and to protect students from digital technology's potential risks. School counselors consider the ethical and legal considerations of technological applications, including confidentiality concerns, student and community safety concerns, security issues, potential benefits and limitations of communication practices using electronic media, and managing appropriate boundaries with students and education partners (ASCA, 2022). In addition, school counselors, in collaboration with education partners:

- Adhere to legal, ethical, district and school policies and guidelines when using technology with students and education partners and/or working in a virtual school counseling setting (ASCA, 2023)
- Provide culturally sustaining instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling to help each and every student demonstrate technology use that enhances learning strategies, self-management and social skills (ASCA, 2021)
- Provide educators and families with guidelines for the appropriate use of technology by students
- Address individual and systemic repercussions related to the impact of inappropriate student social media/technology use (ASCA, 2021; Gallo, et al., 2018; Tinstman Jones, et al., 2020)
- Take measures to maintain the confidentiality of student information and educational records stored or transmitted through any electronic technology (ASCA, 2022)
- Keep informed about new academic integrity programs and technological advances that may affect students or education systems (e.g., artificial intelligence (technology)
- Be involved in creating school and district policies to address potential risks and benefits

If a school or district uses an online student safety software (e.g., Gaggle, Securly, GoGuardian) to monitor for potentially harmful behavior, school counselors advocate for school policies that share identified concerns directly to parents/guardians. These notifications should be coupled with resources and/or referrals, as well as procedures for students to follow in emergencies when the school counselor is not available.

In addition, schools or districts should respond to technological reports of threats, harm to self and others in collaboration with multidisciplinary school teams. Inform parents/guardians and school administration when a student poses a serious and foreseeable risk of harm to self or others (Cowen, et al., 2021). This notification is to be done after careful deliberation and

consultation with appropriate professionals, such as other school counselors, school nurse, school psychologist, school social worker, school resource officer, or child protective services. Even if the danger appears relatively remote, parents/guardians must be notified (ASCA, 2022).

School counselors take the following actions to promote the safe, responsible use of technology (ASCA, 2022; iKeepSafe, 2022):

- Advocate for equitable access to technology for each and every student
- Advocate for school policies and multitiered interventions that detect harmful student behavior and engage in risk-reduction approaches
- Respond to online incidents affecting conditions for learning
- Facilitate and monitor school wide cyberbullying prevention and intervention programs
- Promote and advocate for practices supporting a positive school climate, culture and belonging
- Address and promote student digital citizenship, cyber-balance, healthy content choices, social awareness and the impact of digital habits on mental health through direct student services and collaboration with families and the school community
- Develop peer-helper programs encouraging students to help each other understand technological risks, practice responsible use and support other students who are vulnerable
- Refrain from the use of personal social media, text and email accounts to interact with students unless sanctioned by the school district

Summary

School counselors recognize the impact interactive digital technology has on student learning, wellbeing, and safety. School counselors promote the responsible use of technology in collaboration with families, school staff, and the community to increase and improve student well-being and safety.

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The School Counselor and Students with Disabilities

(Adopted 1999; Revised 2004, 2010, 2013, 2016, 2022)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors encourage and support academic, career and social/emotional development for each and every student through school counseling programs. School counselors are committed to helping each and every student realize their potential and meet or exceed academic standards with consideration for both the strengths and challenges resulting from disabilities and other special needs.

The Rationale

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires public schools to provide a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for each and every student. Under IDEA, 7.2 million public school students are identified as having a disability and receive special education services (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). IDEA defines a child with a disabilities to be a child evaluated in accordance with §§300.304 through 300.311 as having any of the following:

- intellectual disability
- hearing impairment (including deafness)
- speech or language impairment
- visual impairment (including blindness)
- serious emotional disturbance (referred to in this part as "emotional disturbance")
- orthopedic impairment
- autism
- traumatic brain injury
- other health impairment
- specific learning disability
- deaf-blindness
- multiple disabilities

In addition, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects qualified individuals with disabilities defined as persons with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. For a complete list of major life activities refer to ADA Amendments Act of 2008.

School counselors strive to help each and every student achieve their full potential, including students with disabilities, within the scope of the school counseling program. School counselors recognize their strengths and limitations in working with students with disabilities, are aware of current research and seek to implement best practices in working with students presenting with any disability category and who, by reason thereof, need special education and related services.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors provide direct and indirect services to students with disabilities through the implementation of a school counseling program (Goodman-Scott, et al., 2019). School counselors recognize the strengths of students with disabilities as well as their challenges and provide best practices and current research in supporting their academic, career and social/emotional needs (ASCA, 2022).

School counselor responsibilities may include, but are not limited to:

- Offering curriculum lessons, individual and/or group counseling that are culturally responsive and inclusive of the accommodations provided to students with special needs
- providing short-term, goal-focused counseling in instances where it is appropriate to include these strategies as a part of the IEP or 504 plan
- encouraging family involvement in the educational process
- consulting and collaborating with staff and families to understand the special needs of a student and understanding the accommodations and modifications needed to assist the student

- advocating for students with special needs in the school and in the community
- contributing to the school's multidisciplinary team within the scope and practice of the school counseling program
- identifying students who may need to be assessed to determine special education or 504 plan eligibility
- collaborating with other related student support professionals (e.g., school psychologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, special education staff, speech and language pathologists) in the delivery of services
- providing assistance with developing academic, transition and postsecondary plans for students with IEPs and 504 plans as appropriate

Inappropriate administrative or supervisory responsibilities for the school counselor include but are not limited to:

- making singular decisions regarding placement or retention
- serving in any supervisory capacity related to IDEA implementation
- serving as the school district representative for the team writing the IEP
- coordinating, writing or supervising a specific plan under Section 504 of Public Law 93-112
- coordinating, writing or supervising IEP implementation
- providing long-term therapy

Summary

The school counselor takes an active role in student achievement and postsecondary planning through the implementation of a school counseling program. As part of this program, school counselors advocate for students with special needs and disabilities, encourage family involvement in their child's education and collaborate with other educational professionals to promote academic achievement, college/career readiness and social/emotional wellness for each and every student.

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The School Counselor and Discipline

(Adopted 1989; revised 1993, 1999, 2001, 2007, 2013, 2019, 2025)

ASCA Position

School counselors have specialized training and skills in promoting appropriate mindsets and behaviors for student success and preventing disruptive student behavior. School counselors are not disciplinarians; they collaborate with school personnel in developing individual and schoolwide support activities and programs that encourage positive student behavior where effective teaching and learning can take place.

The Rationale

Disruptive student behavior is one of the most serious, ongoing problems confronting school systems today (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Schools are adopting proactive approaches by establishing, teaching and reinforcing a shared set of behavioral expectations for all students and are moving away from a one-size-fits-all discipline model in favor of a more data-informed, individualized and positive framework. Hence, school counselors can promote these best practices to foster long-term effective learning environments for each and every student (Lloyd et al., 2023).

To effectively promote life-readiness and academic success for each and every student, school counselors must maintain a relationship with students that fosters wellness and success (ASCA, 2022). Therefore, school counselors should not be involved in administering discipline. It is especially crucial for schools to move away from punitive disciplinary practices, which conflict with current understanding of trauma and its impact on student well-being (Brown, 2025). School counselors understand the impact of trauma and how it might influence student behavior.

School counselors have the skills to be an impartial and resourceful consultant, mediator and student advocate. Furthermore, school counselors understand that disparities in disciplinary actions may occur that disproportionately affect students of color, male students and students with disabilities (Cruz et al., 2021) and can address these disparities through leadership, advocacy and collaboration promoting systemic change.

School counselors have training in positive mental health development and prevention efforts for school discipline. Therefore, school counselors support students by understanding the motive behind their behaviors and are best positioned to serve as guides for discipline procedures (Fisher & Devlin, 2023).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors provide school counseling programs that promote life-readiness and academic success for each and every student. These programs promote positive student mindsets and behaviors, which create a safe, effective learning environment for each and every student and focus on positive, healthy behaviors.

Within a multitiered system of supports, school counselors:

- Promote and lead wellness and prevention efforts to create safe, supportive school environments
- Provide instruction on topics contributing to safe classrooms
- Lead individual and small-group counseling that encourages positive behavior choices and responsibility for self and actions
- Coordinate and facilitate programs beneficial for positive behaviors
- Participate in student return-to-school meetings to create plans for student support after a prolonged absence
- Provide teacher support in the use of appropriate classroom management strategies
- Consult with families, teachers, administrators and other education partners to understand and promote developmentally appropriate student behavior
- Collaborate with teachers and other education partners to design and implement positive behavior and intervention support plans for individual students
- Collaborate with school partners to develop, implement and maintain a developmentally appropriate schoolwide discipline program
- Serve as a mediator for student-to-student and student-to-staff conflicts

- Support practices that facilitate student well-being while accounting for family's cultural perspectives
- Provide staff development on trauma-sensitive approaches to address student behavior, de-escalation practices and emotional regulation of students and adults (Brown, 2025; Fisher & Devlin, 2023)
- Remain informed of school, district and state policies related to student discipline
- Advocate for use of best practices for schoolwide discipline, including ensuring objective and equitable disciplinary practices that prevent implicit biases
- Understand system-level change in schools and may help inform schoolwide climate and culture that ultimately shapes the approach to discipline (Goodman-Scott & Ziomek-Daigle, 2021)

Summary

School counselors have specialized training and skills in promoting appropriate student behavior and preventing disruptive student behavior School counselors maintain positive relationships with students to promote life-readiness and student success. The school counselor is a significant contributor to the development of the prevention and intervention programs through which problem behaviors are managed and positive behaviors are nurtured.

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The School Counselor and Equity for Each and Every Student

(Adopted 2006, revised 2012, 2018, 2024)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors acknowledge and value individual and group differences that exist among students. School counselors are advocates for the equitable treatment of each and every student and strive to establish inclusive and welcoming learning environments in which each and every student can thrive and reach their full potential.

The Rationale

Students who are members of marginalized populations within the United States have historically encountered barriers to equitable education. These marginalized populations encompass a range of students, including, but not limited to, students of color, girls, students with disabilities (Education and Human Resources Development, 2017) and LGBTQ+ students (Leung et al., 2022).

The inequitable treatment of students of color is well-documented. There are significant achievement gaps in graduation rates for Black and Hispanic students of color compared with their Asian and white counterparts. In addition, male students of color graduate at lower rates than female students of color, further illustrating that intersecting cultural identities can create additional inequities for students (Reeves & Kalkat, 2023). Similarly, recent statistics also indicate that graduation rates for Black, Hispanic and Indigenous students are below the U.S. average and lower than those of white students (NCES, 2023b).

In 2014, the number of students of color in U.S. public schools surpassed that of white students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). In 2023, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that white students comprised only 45% of the public school population (NCES, 2023a).

Multiple inequities exist throughout the education system between white students and students of color. More often, Black students are identified as having a learning disability (12% of black children compared with 8.5% of white children). Conversely, 60% of students identified as gifted and talented are white, compared with only 9% of Black students identified as gifted. Similar discrepancies exist within school discipline with Black students experiencing harsher punishments than white students (Holcomb-McCoy, 2022).

Furthermore, The College Board reported achievement gaps between racial groups, with white students consistently scoring higher than their Black and Hispanic peers on AP exams (Ewing & Wyatt, 2023). Access to rigorous coursework is also affected by racial and ethnic disparities, as evidenced by reduced enrollment and lower completion rates for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs (NCES, 2023). Thus, it is evident that systemic racism and bias have affected students of color by impeding their ability to thrive and achieve in school (Kendi, 2022).

Building relationships with families and the community breaks down barriers that historically excluded and oppressed groups experience within a school system. (Beard, et al, 2021). Each and every student has the right to a school counselor who acts as a social justice advocate, seeks to identify and address inequities, supports students from all cultural backgrounds and consults with others when additional support is needed.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors develop and implement a comprehensive school counseling program promoting success for each and every student. School counselors understand the importance of collaborating with school and community partners to help each and every student succeed and work to close achievement, opportunity, attainment and funding gaps in their schools, and districts. School counselors demonstrate cultural competence by possessing the knowledge and skills necessary to serve students in a culturally responsive manner (American Psychological Association, 2023).

School counselors promote equitable treatment of each and every student by:

- Providing equitable access to school counseling programs for each and every student
- Advocating for the academic, career and social/emotional development of students from marginalized groups
- Using data to identify gaps in achievement and opportunity and developing a plan to address such disparities
- Advocating for access to rigorous courses and postsecondary opportunities for marginalized groups
- Maintaining professional knowledge of the ever-changing and complex world of students' culture
- Maintaining knowledge and skills for working in a diverse and multicultural work setting
- Sharing up-to-date culturally competent best practices with administration, faculty and staff
- Promoting the review and development of school policies leading to equitable treatment of each and every student and opposing school policies hindering equitable treatment of any student
- Creating a plan to address any programmatic disparities or inequities that affect access and enrollment within educational programs, such as English- language learners, special education, gifted and talented education, honors, Advanced Placement, dual enrollment and International Baccalaureate
- Collaborating with families to provide access to resources to meet student needs
- Acting as a liaison between home and school to foster two-way communication and assist students and families with promoting positive academic, career and social/emotional development

Summary

School counselors recognize and distinguish individual and group differences and strive to value each and every student. Incorporating student and family voices, school counselors promote the equitable treatment of each and every student in school and the community.

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The School Counselor and Students in Foster Care

(Adopted 2018; revised 2024)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors advocate for and implement school counseling programs that meet academic, career and social/emotional needs for each and every student. School counselors recognize that students who experience adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), such as being in the foster care system, are at a much higher risk for negative health and educational outcomes. Students in foster care represent an often-overlooked student population.

The Rationale

Children and youth in foster care represent one of the most vulnerable student subgroups in this country. Approximately 391,098 children were in foster care in 2022 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2022). Children in foster care experience much higher levels of residential and school instability than their peers and are more likely to face a variety of academic difficulties (CDC, 2023; U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016) School counselors are aware of the cultural factors that may be in play as students transition into cultures that may not be the same as their family of origin. Additionally, school counselors consistently support students in culturally affirming ways.

Strong, collaborative relationships between public schools and child welfare agencies improve the educational outcomes of students in the foster care system (Huscroft-D'Angelo et al., 2022; Stapleton & Chen, 2020). It is imperative that school counselors collaborate across specialties and professions, as well as with students' families of origin and foster families, to support individual students and their unique needs.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors and education partners work together to learn federal and state laws and school district policies regarding students in foster care. School counselors should be knowledgeable about special circumstances and rights students may have in qualifying states and districts in which youth in foster care are able to receive transportation to their school of origin, earn their high school diploma with fewer credits, be eligible for partial credits and/or may qualify for a fifth year of high school if they changed schools after their sophomore year (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). School counselors serve as the liaison between their school and child welfare agencies to promote communication and collaboration to address students' educational needs in their specific communities and improve students' educational outcomes. School counselors advocate for policies and procedures addressing the unique needs of students in foster care.

In addition, school counselors:

- Promote an inclusive school climate that includes connectedness and a sense of belonging for students in foster care
- Recognize that a stable environment is helpful for students in foster care and encourage stability, safety and community in all areas
- Assist in bridging the communication gaps among schools, families, child welfare agencies and communities during times of transitions
- Identify and promote protective factors and strengths to support development
- Collaborate with foster/biological family and community partners (e.g., social workers, therapists, attorneys and case managers)
- Display an awareness of the challenges students face, including promoting representation in materials (e.g., families/guardians instead of parents)
- Address personal and systemic biases and deficit-based approaches to eliminate systemic barriers impeding the success of students in foster care (ASCA, 2021)
- Support school and district teams in the decision-making process regarding educational equity and planning
- Use data-informed approaches to identify needs and support remediation efforts for students in foster care experiencing educational gaps due to transitions
- Engage in and promote professional development opportunities for students in foster care and advocate for their diverse, distinct needs in school

- Support the college and career readiness needs of students in foster care through postsecondary-focused resources and activities (e.g., current scholarships, grants and application-fee waiver programs available to students in foster care in their states)
- Understand the intersections of students' cultural identities and the need for culturally responsive practices

Summary

School counselors recognize students in the foster care system are resilient, have many strengths and may require additional support in obtaining resources, academic planning, college/career advisement and social/emotional care. School counselors recognize it is their duty to be knowledgeable about legislation, resources and needs and to advocate for students in foster care.

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The School Counselor and Gender Equity and Inclusivity

(Adopted 1983; revised 1993, 1999, 2002, 2008, 2014, 2020, 2026)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors affirm each and every student, regardless of someone's gender, gender identity or gender expression, has the right to be treated with dignity and respect by creating safe learning environments free from discrimination, harassment and bullying. School counselors are committed to recognizing gender bias, modeling gender inclusivity, promoting gender equity and safeguarding the well-being of transgender and gender-nonconforming students. These principles are applied within the scope of the school counselor's professional responsibilities and in accordance with applicable federal, state and local law and district policy.

The Rationale

School counselors recognize that gender-based discrimination negatively affects student outcomes across academic, career and social/emotional domains (Glisten, 2026; Leaper & Gutierrez, 2024). To expand the range of options available to students, it is important that school counselors become acutely aware of ways in which language, organizational structures, leader selection, expectations of individuals and activity implementation affect opportunities based on gender. Many federal and state laws have been passed protecting individuals from gender discrimination in education and work (e.g., Equal Pay Act of 1963; Civil Rights Act of 1964; Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967; Title IX, 1972; Women's Educational Equity Act of 1974; Taylor Law, 1989; Vocational Amendments of 1976; Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009). These important legal mandates ensure equal treatment under the law but do not necessarily change ingrained attitudes and behaviors.

Although gender discrimination affects every student, transgender and gender-nonconforming students may face unique circumstances requiring additional support (Frost & Meyer, 2023; Glisten, 2026; Nath et al., 2024). For example, systemic barriers may lead to students reporting higher negative mental health and behavior outcomes (Russell et al., 2021). Research indicates that transgender and gender-nonconforming students with supportive adults in their school and affirming policies in their districts are more likely to feel safe and have a greater sense of belonging in school (Glisten, 2026).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors advocate for affirming, safe environments for each and every student, while aligning practice with law and policy at the federal, state, local and district levels (ASCA, 2022). Although the guidelines within this statement provide important suggestions, they cannot anticipate every situation that might arise in different settings.

School counselors:

- Model gender-inclusive actions and attitudes, as well as gender-affirming language, with both students and staff
- Provide proactive, developmentally appropriate, classroom instruction to educate and reduce gender-based bullying and discrimination
- Maintain awareness of continually evolving legislation and policy around gender equity and identity in educational settings and align practice accordingly
- Deliver classroom instruction on postsecondary readiness that recognizes stereotypical gender role expectations and reduces bias that may influence students' career expectations and opportunities (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2023; National Science Foundation [NSF], 2023; Oliveria et al., 2020)
- Advocate for each and every student to have access to curricular or extracurricular opportunities, including athletic programs, and work to alleviate discrimination when policies limit transgender and gender-nonconforming students' participation
- Support dress codes that are free from discrimination and equally enforced for each and every student
- Affirm that the determination of a student's gender identity rests solely with the student.
- Consider how confidential, sensitive information about a student's identity may be accessible to other staff with a legitimate educational interest and parents/legal guardians, per the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
- Respect student autonomy and provide accurate, transparent information to each and every student about confidentiality limits and relevant laws and policies (ASCA, 2022)

- Understand that it is best practice to refer to students by names and pronouns that affirm their gender, gender identity and gender expression (Russell et al., 2021)
- Advocate for affirming bathroom and locker room policies so each and every student can feel safe and use the selected facilities with dignity (Glisten, 2026)
- Encourage the routine re-evaluation of district operations, programs, policies and activities promoting gender-inclusive strategies and work collaboratively to remove barriers inhibiting gender equity (Glisten, 2026; McQuillan et al., 2024)

Summary

School counselors are committed to creating emotionally, intellectually and physically safe learning environments for each and every student, regardless of gender, gender identity or gender expression. School counselors' model and advocate for gender equity and inclusivity that supports all members of the school community.

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AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

The School Counselor and Gifted and Talented Student Programs

(Adopted 1988; revised 1993, 1999, 2001, 2007, 2013, 2019, 2025)

ASCA Position

Gifted and talented students have unique and diverse developmental needs. Intentional, well-structured gifted and talented education programs offer a range of benefits, and school counselors provide additional academic, career and social/emotional support to meet those needs within the scope of the school counseling program and in collaboration with parents/guardians, school personnel, and community partners.

The Rationale

Students who are gifted and talented often experience unique and diverse challenges related to their social/emotional and behavioral development. Therefore, it is important for school counselors to be aware of their needs so appropriate support can be provided (Minor & Duchac, 2020; Wood & Peterson, 2018).

Additionally, significant disparities exist in gifted education programs nationwide. Students who are Black, Hispanic, from rural communities or lower socioeconomic status are often unidentified and underrepresented within gifted education (Crawford et al., 2020; Ford et al., 2020). In addition, students from minoritized groups enrolled in gifted education often experience challenges such as isolation, microaggressions, stereotype threat and negative peer pressure. Due to the lack of diversity in the teaching field, teachers may have difficulty meeting the needs of gifted students from multicultural backgrounds (Cohen, 2022).

Intentional, well-structured gifted and talented education programming offers a range of activities supporting gifted students' development. These activities may include proactive strategies such as referring students for gifted identification (Crawford et al., 2020), guiding them in setting and achieving college and career goals, clarifying postsecondary pathways (Edwin & Fisher, 2023) and enhancing academic performance.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors refer and provide consultation in the identification of gifted and talented students when appropriate through the use of a districtwide, multicriteria system (i.e., intellectual ability; academic performance; visual and performing arts ability; practical arts ability; creative-thinking ability; leadership potential; parent/guardian, teacher, peer nomination; expert assessment). The definition of gifted and talented requirements differs by state and district. School counselors are involved in the analysis of data obtained from multicriteria sources and are not responsible for the coordination, collection, and/or administration of the multi-criterion system or any assessment used in the selection process.

In addition, school counselors often provide focused social/emotional support through individual or small-group counseling (Boulden et al., 2021). They promote supportive school climate for gifted and talented students through collaboration with teachers (Wood, 2018) and lead efforts among parents/guardians to ensure consistent support (Johnson et al., 2024).

School counselors advocate for the inclusion of and the participation in activities that effectively address the academic, career and social/emotional needs of gifted and talented students at all academic levels (ASCA, 2022). School counselors assist in promoting understanding and awareness of the unique traits and issues that may both positively and adversely affect gifted and talented students including:

- accelerated learning
- advanced cognitive functioning
- underachievement
- dropping out of school
- delinquency
- difficulty in peer relationships
- stress management
- depression
- anxiety
- twice exceptional

School counselors play a pivotal role in advocating for each and every student, serving as crucial change agents who can:

- support underrepresented gifted learners
- challenge biased assessments and referral systems
- connect families with available resources
- promote more equitable identification practices

School counselors keep current on the latest gifted and talented programming research and recommendations to employ best practices to meet the needs of identified students and collaborate with other school personnel to maximize opportunities for all gifted and talented students. They also keep current on the latest gifted and talented programming research and recommendations to employ best practices to meet the needs of identified students and collaborate with other school personnel to maximize opportunities for all gifted and talented students (Hatton, et al., 2024).

Summary

Students identified as gifted and talented have unique developmental needs and special abilities, which are considered when implementing a school counseling program. School counselors work in collaboration with other school personnel to maximize opportunities for gifted and talented students.

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The School Counselor and Group Counseling

(Adopted 1989; revised 1993, 2002, 2008; reviewed 1999, 2008, 2014, 2020, 2026)

ASCA Position

Group counseling is a vital direct service to students and an essential part of a school counseling program. Group counseling has a positive effect on academic, career and social/emotional development when delivered using evidence-based practices and should be supported by school administration to ensure groups can be facilitated effectively and students are readily able to access group services.

The Rationale

Group counseling involves a number of students working on shared tasks to develop knowledge, skills and supportive relationships in a group setting. It has been shown to be efficient and effective in improving academic outcomes (Kayler & Sherman, 2018; Berger, 2018; Steen et al., 2018), social/emotional competence, belonging and positive mental health development (Durlak et al., 2011; CDC, 2021). The group counseling process can help reduce social isolation, improve emotional regulation, increase positive peer relations and foster a sense of belonging (Howard & Pedroz, 2025). Group work in schools is an integral component of the ASCA National Model® (Erford, 2019; ASCA, 2025; Howard & Pedroz, 2025).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors provide evidence-based small-group counseling services in schools to support students' life-readiness and academic success. Group counseling should be accessible to all students in a pre-K–12 setting, and data should be used to determine group topics and outcomes of group participation (ASCA, 2022). Ongoing professional development helps school counselors stay up to date on best practices for small-group counseling in schools (ASCA, 2026; Florida Atlantic University, 2025).

School counselors provide counseling sessions in small-group settings that:

- Help students overcome issues impeding achievement or success
- Help students identify problems, causes, alternatives and possible consequences so they can make decisions and take appropriate action
- Are planned, goal-focused, evidence-based and short-term in nature

School counselors have a responsibility to screen potential group members and obtain informed consent. Informed consent should include the group's purpose and goals, limits to confidentiality and information regarding voluntary participation. Best practices include informing parents/guardians of student participation in and the purpose of the small group and student agreement to participate, following school and district policy (ASCA, 2022). When students require long-term counseling or services requiring family therapy, school counselors make referrals to appropriate community resources (ASCA, 2025) and maintain collaborative relationships with providers to align service coordination.

Summary

Group counseling is an efficient and effective way to meet students' academic, career and social/emotional needs. Group counseling is an integral part of a school counseling program and should be supported by school administrators and school districts. Group counseling has a positive effect on student academic achievement, postsecondary and life readiness, social/emotional development and positive mental health development.

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AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

The School Counselor and School-Related Gun Violence Prevention and Response

(Adopted 2018; revised, 2019, 2025)

ASCA Position

School counselors design, deliver and assess a comprehensive school counseling program that promotes a safe school environment vital to the success of each and every student. School counselors collaborate with school staff and community partners to promote school environments free from gun violence and threats of gun violence and are responsive to student needs in the event of gun violence or threats of gun violence.

The Rationale

Gun violence is the leading cause of premature death among children and teens ages 0–19 in the United States (CDC, 2024). In 2023, 9% of high school students were threatened or injured with a weapon, such as a gun, knife or club, on school property during the past year (YRBSS, 2023). From 2013 through 2022, 720 incidents of gunfire were identified on school grounds. Additionally, the shooters were either current or former students in approximately 75% of the incidents (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, n.d.).

School-related gun violence has detrimental effects on students, school personnel and the overall community. Students who experience gun violence face significant challenges with academic achievement, physical health and social/emotional development. They are at an increased risk for developing depression, anxiety, substance abuse and violent behaviors. Furthermore, when students experience gun violence in schools, they are left traumatized and feel unsafe and vulnerable. These outcomes are detrimental for students, as they must feel safe within their school environments to learn and thrive (Paolini, 2020; Everytown, 2019).

The School Counselor's Role

As leaders and advocates of safe-school initiatives, school counselors are uniquely positioned within schools to assist with developing preventive and proactive school policies and procedures (Wachter Morris et al., 2021). They are a vital resource in the creation, development and implementation of best-practice strategies designed to improve school climate, fostering connection, support and collaboration for each and every student (Ellington et al., 2023).

To promote a safe school environment free of gun violence and threats of gun violence, school counselors:

- Facilitate classroom instruction, individual and small-group counseling focused on positive social/emotional development (Paolini, 2020).
- Conduct schoolwide programs to promote a safe and inclusive school environment fostering a sense of belonging for each and every student (Paolini, 2020).
- Identify students who are at risk for gun violence (Paolini, 2020; Ellington et al., 2023).
- Assist students at risk by collaborating with families and other school personnel.
- Provide students with a way to make anonymous reports when concerns arise (Paolini, 2020).
- Implement bullying prevention and intervention efforts (Paolini, 2020).
- Collaborate with families and other education partners to make referrals as needed (Paolini, 2020; Ellington, et al. (2023).
- Participate as a member of the school's multidisciplinary threat assessment team of school personnel, including faculty, staff, administrators, coaches, and available school resource officers (Stone, 2022; Paolini, 2020).
- Educate the school community and families about gun violence and warning signs for students at risk (Paolini, 2020).
- Encourage students, families and school personnel to monitor themselves for warning signs or concerns (Ellington, et.al., 2023).
- Encourage family involvement to support students at home and at school.
- Communicate with parents/guardians to determine if students have out-of-school mental health support, and seek permission to collaborate accordingly (Ellington, et.al., 2023).
- Advocate for manageable caseloads so each and every student can receive appropriate attention and support.
- Review the school's crisis plan to understand the school counselor's role

- Integrate a continuum of mental health supports within a multi-tiered system of support (Ellington, et al. 2023).
- Use surveys to gather information about safety concerns and feelings about overall safety (Paolini, 2020; Ellington et. al., 2023).

School counselors are encouraged to advocate and oppose any efforts to arm educators, including teachers, school counselors and administrators. Research has revealed that arming school personnel elicits several concerns, such as the negative impact on school climate, school staff's lack of training and the danger associated with an accidental discharge of one's weapon (Everytown for Gun Safety, 2024).

Summary

Through the implementation of a school counseling program, school counselors promote school safety to create an environment where each and every student succeeds. School counselors work collaboratively with school and community partners in an effort to prevent and respond to both threats of gun violence and incidents of gun violence.

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The School Counselor and the Identification, Prevention and Intervention of Harmful or Disadvantageous Behaviors

(Adopted 1989-90; revised 1993, 1999, 2004, 2011, 2017, 2023)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors design and implement comprehensive school counseling programs that include processes for identifying students who may be engaging in harmful or disadvantageous behaviors. As part of that program, school counselors provide developmentally appropriate, culturally sensitive interventions and supports to assess the unmet need or lagging skill behind those behaviors and to promote the mindsets and behaviors each and every student needs for success now and in the future.

The Rationale

All schools and communities have students who could potentially drop out of school and/or engage in disadvantageous behaviors, such as absenteeism, performing below their potential academically, substance abuse, bullying, cyberbullying, suicidal ideation, physical violence, or engaging in self-harm and other destructive or dangerous behaviors. Additionally, schools and communities may have policy, environmental or resource issues that leave students vulnerable to disadvantageous behavior (Holcomb-McCoy, 2022). These behaviors may have lifelong implications and often stem from social/ emotional concerns, including low self-esteem, identity issues, family and relationship problems, grief, trauma, neglect, abuse and/or substance use.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors develop school counseling programs designed to prevent harmful behaviors while also taking proactive leadership to identify and intervene with students who demonstrate these behaviors. School counselors advocate for systemic, trauma-informed and culturally inclusive, school-based means of identification, multitiered interventions and, when necessary, behavioral and mental health referrals to school, district and/or community supports.

Using data to develop and assess preventive and responsive services to address these risks is an integral part of a school counseling program. School counselors collaborate with staff, school teams, other students, families, and the community to identify students participating in harmful behaviors and intervene with these students to limit or eliminate the risk of harm or negative consequences.

Taking a leadership role in promoting student success, school counselors:

- Provide preventive schoolwide initiatives and classroom lessons to increase student knowledge and awareness of the dangers of harmful behaviors, as well as to cultivate mindsets and behaviors promoting student success, including learning strategies, self-management skills and social skills
- Provide multitiered intervention services, including Tier 1 classroom lessons and Tier 2 short-term counseling in individual or group settings
- Collaborate and consult with families to increase involvement, including referring students and families to support services and community agencies
- Recognize the limits of confidentiality and the inherent parent/guardian/caregiver's legal and inherent rights to be the guiding force in their child's life as indicated in sections A.2.f & A.2.g of the *ASCA Ethical Standards* (2022)
- Work to reduce the stigma of mental health and reinforce help-seeking behavior
- Implement trauma-informed practices that may help staff utilize appropriate interventions while maintaining sensitivity to students (Haviland, 2017)
- Collaborate with school administration and community members to identify and assist students in crisis
- Enhance social support by using an ecological and multicultural approach to understanding the sociocultural factors at work in their communities
- Conduct staff development for school and district staff on prevention and intervention of harmful behaviors
- Advocate for change in policies and procedures that are not culturally responsive and/or perpetuate inequities
- Advocate for changes in the school and community that promote well-being, success and equitable access to resources

Summary
School counselors design and implement school counseling programs that prevent harmful behaviors, while also taking proactive leadership to identify and intervene with students who demonstrate these behaviors. As a part of this program, school counselors collaborate with other educators and education partners to provide prevention, early identification, and trauma-informed interventions to minimize or eliminate harmful and disadvantageous behaviors.

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AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

The School Counselor and High-Stakes Testing

(Adopted 2002, Revised 2007, 2014, 2017, 2024)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors advocate for the use of multiple criteria when educational decisions based on student performance are made, including academic placement, intervention and areas pertaining to students' postsecondary plans. School counselors oppose the use of a single test to make important educational decisions affecting students, teachers and schools. To prevent students from losing access to their school counselor for essential academic, career and social/emotional support, school counselors should not be tasked with the time-consuming role of test coordination.

The Rationale

High-stakes tests are assessments "used for grade advancement; as barriers to graduation; and for rewarding or punishing students, teachers, principals, schools, districts and states based on test performance" (NASSP, 2024). The Every Student Succeeds Act, enacted in 2015, represents a legislative move toward identifying multiple measures to assess student performance. This legislation encourages an approach to testing that moves away from exclusively using high-stakes tests to inform decisions (White House, 2015). Single test results can provide valuable information related to student learning and performance, but using the results of multiple measures in a comprehensive manner provides a deeper understanding of a student's abilities.

Testing and test scores have a significant impact on college admissions, industry credentialing and other areas pertaining to students' plans and goals. When results from testing are the only factors used to make educational decisions, these decisions may not accurately measure quality of knowledge, may be biased and may disincentivize culturally responsive pedagogy (Stembridge, 2023). It is important to consider all factors that can provide additional information related to student performance. School counselors understand that some students struggle with testing, which can prevent high-stakes test data from providing an accurate reflection of students' capabilities and knowledge (Stembridge, 2023).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors have an integral role in promoting equitable measures of student performance including:

- Advocating for culturally responsive assessments and multiple measures of student performance
- Collaborating with teachers and other school staff to coordinate and provide information on integrating test-taking strategies, content and practice tests into regular classroom instruction
- Educating students and their families about postsecondary opportunities and how high-stakes testing may relate to postsecondary planning
- Supporting students and their families as they navigate testing concerns (e.g., test anxiety, test accommodation plans, test preparation programs, etc.)
- Interpreting cognitive, aptitude and achievement tests (ASCA, 2019b)

The school counselor's role does not include coordinating cognitive, aptitude or achievement testing programs (ASCA, 2019b). When these roles are inappropriately assigned, school counselors should respectfully employ advocacy skills to help administrators understand that school counselors' time should be invested in working with students and staff on issues promoting academic, career and social/emotional development as outlined in the ASCA National Model.

Summary

School counselors recognize that high-stakes test results are one of many measures that can be used to assess student performance. School counselors have an integral role in promoting equitable and culturally responsive measures of student performance. Therefore, school counselors advocate for using multiple measures when life-influencing decisions are being made.

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The School Counselor and Students Experiencing Homelessness

(Adopted, 2010; revised, 2018, 2024)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors collaborate with school staff and community organizations to identify students who are experiencing homelessness and recognize that students' housing experiences may greatly affect their mental, physical, academic, career and social/emotional development. As culturally responsive student advocates, school counselors understand how housing experiences may cause forms of oppression and collaborate with families, school staff and community partners to remove barriers to success.

The Rationale

The McKinney-Vento Act defines children and youth experiencing homelessness as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence" (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). This definition includes but is not limited to children who are:

- sharing housing due to economic hardship or loss of housing (i.e., doubled- up)
- living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or campgrounds
- living in emergency or transitional housing (e.g., shelters)
- sleeping in places not designed or ordinarily used for human habitation
- living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, etc.

Data from the National Center for Homeless Education report more than 1.2 million K–12 students who experienced homelessness in the United States were enrolled in public schools during the 2021–2022 school year (NCHE, 2023). This number includes students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, migratory students and unaccompanied students experiencing homelessness. Students experiencing homelessness may face increased educational barriers that can impede overall success in school (Haskett, et al. 2016). These challenges can include low academic performance, learning loss, delays and gaps, grade retention, social/emotional concerns and increased risk of adverse childhood experiences (De Gregorio et al., 2022, Tobin, 2016).

The McKinney-Vento Assistance Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, guarantees educational rights and supports for students experiencing homelessness and seeks to remove barriers to their educational success (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). This includes transportation, immunization and physical examination requirements, fees, residency and birth certificate requirements, and lack of school records impeding homeless families' ability to enroll their children in schools.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors are uniquely positioned to support students experiencing homelessness within academic, career and social/emotional domains (Waller & Rascoe, 2023). School counselors provide direct services in the areas of instruction, appraisal, advisement and counseling to support the success of students experiencing homelessness. Through indirect student services, school counselors collaborate with families, education and community partners to increase educational equity and access (ASCA, 2019).

To support and advocate for students experiencing homelessness, school counselors abide by policies and procedures, consider individual student needs and collaborate with educational and community partners.

Policies and Procedures School counselors:

- Adhere to federal and state laws/mandates, ethical guidelines and school district policies related to supporting students experiencing homelessness (ASCA, 2022)
- Consult with and refer to school administrators, McKinney-Vento school district liaisons, state homeless education coordinators and community partners to promote the educational success of students experiencing homelessness (NCHE, 2023)

- Support administrative decision-making regarding the determination of eligibility for services under McKinney-Vento in schools
- Partake in professional development opportunities to increase awareness and understanding of the McKinney-Vento Act, Every Student Succeeds Act, school district policy and the rights of students experiencing homelessness (ASCA, 2022)
- Work within their professional scope of practice by managing ethical dilemmas due to multiple roles/relationships in supporting students experiencing homelessness

Individual Student Needs School counselors:

- Acknowledge how prejudice or biases can negatively affect students experiencing homelessness, school staff and community partners (ASCA, 2022).
- Understand the intersections of students' cultural identities and the need for culturally responsive practices when working with students experiencing homelessness and their families (Waller & Rascoe, 2023)
- Use data-informed tools and resources to identify academic needs and support remediation planning for students experiencing homelessness (ASCA, 2019)
- Promote postsecondary readiness resources for students experiencing homelessness through various college- and career-focused activities, including postsecondary transition plans, financial aid and independent student status determination, AP/SAT/ACT preparation and fee waivers, career inventories and college/career advisement (NCHE, 2023)

Collaborative Efforts School counselors:

- Advocate and foster awareness for students experiencing homelessness by supporting families in reducing barriers related to school enrollment, transportation, academic achievement, extracurricular activities/programs and appropriate educational placement (Camp et al., 2019)
- Collaborate with school- and community-based mental health professionals to assess students for common associated concerns, such as adverse childhood experiences, and refer students for additional support as appropriate (Waller & Rascoe, 2023)
- Collaborate with community partners to link students and their families to prevention and intervention resources within the community
- Promote collaborative partnerships with school counseling preparation programs to support the inclusion/integration of research and literature regarding students experiencing homelessness to enhance the training and preparation of future school counselors (Camp et al., 2019)

Summary

School counselors promote awareness and understanding of the issues students face when experiencing homelessness. Although students experiencing homelessness are resilient, school counselors recognize and identify distinct challenges affecting their academic, career and social/emotional development. School counselors collaborate with students, parents/guardians, school and community partners to increase educational equity, access and achievement for students experiencing homelessness.

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The School Counselor and the Individualized Education Program Process

(Adopted, 2026)

ASCA Position

School counselors are collaborative members of the individualized education program (IEP) team who advocate for students with disabilities. School counselors should not be designated as case managers, administrative designees, local education agency representatives or long-term clinical service providers in the IEP process, as these roles compromise delivery of the school counseling program to each and every student.

The Rationale

School counselors are essential collaborators who support academic, career and social/emotional development for each and every student. When school counselors are placed in administrative, case management or mandated service provider roles, their ability to deliver Tier 1 direct student services to each and every student is hindered, and it may also create risks related to licensure, ethics and the provision of a free, appropriate public education (Wikoff, 2020; Stone & Dahir, 2016).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors deliver a school counseling program that improves life-readiness and academic success for each and every student. School counselors maintain clear professional boundaries between the role of the school counselor and the IEP process, ensuring their role remains aligned with school counselor professional and ethical standards (ASCA, 2022a; ASCA, 2025).

School counselors align their school counseling program with the multitiered system of supports (MTSS) process, which further reinforces their professional boundaries in the IEP process. School counseling programs aligned with MTSS include:

- **Tier 1 – Proactive developmental strategies for each and every student and programs for families and staff:** Deliver classroom, grade-level and schoolwide programming that promotes learning strategies, self-management skills and social skills
- **Tier 2 – Interventions for some students:** Provide small-group and individual counseling for students, and referrals, consultation and collaboration with education partners
- **Tier 3 – Indirect services for few students:** Recognize and respond to intensive academic, behavioral and mental health needs through referrals, consultation and collaboration (ASCA, 2025)

School counselors participate as team members of the IEP team when appropriate, serving as collaborators and consultants within multidisciplinary teams supporting students with disabilities (Reese, 2021; Hines et al., 2019). To safeguard their Tier 1 role promoting life-readiness and academic success for each and every student, school counselors should not be designated as case managers, administrative designees, local education agency representatives or long-term clinical service providers.

When participating as members of the IEP team, school counselors:

Provide Advocacy and Access

- Advocate for students in the IEP process by ensuring their voice, strengths and needs are represented and promote equitable access to rigorous coursework, school programs and postsecondary opportunities (ASCA, 2022b, Geltner & Leibforth, 2008)
- Advocate that services included in the IEP are delivered in the least-restrictive environment, including Tier 1 and Tier 2

Provide Social/Emotional and Behavioral Insight

- Provide insight into the student's functioning, including peer relationships, coping skills, behavior patterns and emotional regulation, and help connect these factors to academic performance and school success (Buckley & Mahdavi, 2018)
- Assist the team in identifying student needs and contribute to the development of appropriate, measurable, school-based supports aligned with IEP goals (Barna & Nice, 2021; Frazier et al., 2022)

Provide College, Career and Transition Planning

- Support college and career readiness by contributing to transition planning, aligning IEP goals with postsecondary outcomes related to education, employment and independent living (Challenger et al., 2024).

Clarify the Role of Counseling Services in IEPs

- Distinguish between school-based counseling and long-term clinical therapy as it pertains to the school environment
- Collaborate with the IEP team to determine when Tier 3 intensive or clinical mental health services beyond the scope of school counseling practice are needed

Summary

When school counselors operate within their appropriate role as collaborative advocates in the IEP process, students with disabilities receive more equitable access to opportunities and more support for life-readiness and academic success. School counselors focus on the inclusion of students with IEPs into their school counseling program rather than serve in administrative, case management roles or long-term clinical service providers for the IEP.

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AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

The School Counselor and Letters of Recommendation

(Adopted 2020, 2026)

ASCA Position

School counselors draw on research in college admissions that demonstrates the importance of letters of recommendation within holistic review processes and the need for equitable, ethical and informed practices when developing them. To guide this work, school counselors rely on the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which is a federal statute protecting students' rights regarding educational records.

The Rationale

As student advocates, school counselors use best practices to help each and every student achieve their aspirations. School counselors recognize that letters of recommendation play a significant role in holistic admissions decisions, as they are currently required by more than 250 selective colleges (Common App, 2024). Letters of recommendation offer deeper insight into students' personal qualities, providing context about their opportunities and backgrounds. In addition, it has been found that often "the letters are used not only to determine admissibility but also to determine eligibility for scholarships and honors invitations" (Akos and Kretchmar, 2016, p. 102). School counselors help students and their families understand the value of letters of recommendation.

School counselors are familiar with inequities in college admissions processes. Higher education research indicates that students from lower-income backgrounds are not only less likely to receive letters of recommendation but also receive letters of lower quality than those written for their more affluent peers (Nicola, 2023). Practices such as declining to write letters due to missed deadlines, failing to explicitly teach students how to request letters or providing unequal support to first-generation students and other historically marginalized populations can unintentionally reinforce systemic inequities (Nicola, 2023). School counselors work to mitigate the impact of injustice and inequity and support each and every student in achieving their goals beyond high school.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors' letters of recommendation are especially valuable because school counselors compare students across the entire school and offer a broader perspective than teachers (Kim et al., 2025). These letters offer deeper insight into students' personal qualities, providing context about their opportunities and backgrounds. When students request letters of recommendation, school counselors must balance their support for students by using a strengths-based approach (beneficence) while maintaining honest, conscientious communication without harm to students (nonmaleficence). As school leaders and advocates, school counselors help staff, students and their families understand the legal and ethical practices with an impact on letters of recommendation, as well as the role these letters play in admission processes and future employment opportunities. School counselors also understand the benefits of collaborating with admissions professionals (Savitz, et al., 2026) when writing letters of recommendation.

School counselors understand that offering to provide letters of recommendation cannot be made conditional on waiving one's rights under FERPA (Family Policy Compliance Office [FPCO], 2005). They also understand that an educational agency or institution may not require parents/guardians or students to waive the protections and rights afforded to them under FERPA (U.S. Department of Education, 2023) as a condition of acceptance into an institution or for the receipt of educational services.

In regard to letters of recommendation, school counselors:

- Seek out resources to educate themselves on how to write an ethical/unbiased letter
- Maintain familiarity with federal and state laws and local school board policies concerning personal identifiable information
- Include personal identifiable information only with dated, written consent of the student and/or parents/guardians
- Educate students and their families on the impact of waiving FERPA rights
- Provide teachers and administrators with training, orientation and consultation regarding writing letters of recommendation (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2024)
- Work to gather ample information before writing a letter of recommendation about a student they do not know well, given that generic letters of recommendation are less effective

- Do not sign letters of recommendation they have not written
- Provide the substantive content, evaluation and endorsement expressed in the letter, only using artificial intelligence tools to assist with minor editing for clarity or grammar if necessary (Cha & Chung, n.d.; Dickstein-Fischer, et al., 2025), as AI-generated letters that do not accurately represent the recommender's firsthand knowledge undermine the purpose of the recommendation process and are strongly discouraged (Cha & Chung, n.d.)

Summary

There are many legal and ethical implications associated with writing letters of recommendation for students. School counselors are aware of these implications and apply them in their practice. Additionally, school counselors communicate these best practices to students, their families and educators to best support students as they seek employment and postsecondary opportunities.

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AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

The School Counselor and LGBTQ+ Youth

(Adopted 1995; Revised 2000, 2005, 2007, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2022)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors promote equal opportunity and respect for students regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. School counselors recognize the school experience can be significantly more difficult for students with marginalized identities. School counselors work to eliminate barriers impeding LGBTQ+ student development and achievement.

The Rationale

Despite widespread efforts, LGBTQ+ students continue to face challenges that threaten their academic and social/emotional development in schools. Students report feeling unsafe in school due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression and report experiencing homophobic remarks, harassment and bullying (Kosciw et al., 2020). LGBTQ+ individuals often face multiple risk factors that may place them at greater risk for suicidal behavior (Johns et al., 2020).

School counselors realize these issues affect healthy student development and psychological well-being and advocate for conditions protecting LGBTQ+ youth. Students report lower levels of verbal and physical harassment when they have a supportive adult in school, participate in inclusive curriculum and have delineated policies protecting students from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression (Kosciw et al., 2020).

The School Counselor's Role

The school counselor supports students through the stages of identity development and understands this may be more difficult for LGBTQ+ youth. It is not the school counselor's role to attempt to change a student's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. School counselors recognize the profound harm intrinsic to therapies alleging to change an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity (Ryan et al., 2020) and advocate to protect LGBTQ+ students from this harm. School counselors provide support to LGBTQ+ students to promote academic achievement and social/emotional development. School counselors are committed to the affirmation of all youth regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression and work to create safe and affirming schools. School counselors:

- Advocate for schools to be a safe haven for students regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression while following federal, state and local laws; district policy; and ethical practice.
- Counsel students with questions about their sexual orientation and gender identity as well as students' feelings about the identity of others in an accepting and nonjudgmental manner
- Advocate for equitable educational and extracurricular opportunities for each and every student regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression (ASCA, 2019)
- Advocate for transgender, nonbinary and gender-expansive students regarding access of building facilities (e.g., ensuring a safe environment for restroom use and changing) and gender presentation (e.g., wearing a dress or pants for an orchestra or vocal performance)
- Understand the intersections of students' sexual, gender and racial identities and the additional victimization experienced by LGBTQ+ students of color (Kosciw et al., 2020) and the need for cultural competence when working with them and their families (Craig et al., 2018)
- Promote policies that effectively reduce the use of offensive language, harassment and bullying and improve school climate
- Address absenteeism, lowered educational aspirations and academic achievement, and low psychological well-being as a result of victimization and feeling unsafe at school (Kosciw et al., 2020)
- Provide a safe space for LGBTQ+ students and allies such as Genders and Sexualities Alliance Clubs
- Promote sensitivity and acceptance of diversity among students and staff to include LGBTQ+ students and diverse family systems
- Advocate for the rights of families to access and participate in their student's education and school activities without discrimination (GLSEN, 2021)
- Support an inclusive curriculum at all grade levels (Simons et al., 2018)
- Model language that is inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity

- Advocate for adoption of school policies addressing discrimination and promoting violence-prevention programs to create a safe and supportive school environment (Gower et al., 2017)
- Support students in addressing possible discrimination by staff members (ASCA, 2019)
- Engage in training on supporting LGBTQ+ students and advocating for their rights in schools (Beck & Wikoff, 2020; Gonzalez, 2017; Kull et al., 2017; Simons et al., 2017)
- Encourage staff training on inclusive practices, an affirming school environment, accurate information and risk factors for LGBTQ+ students (Dragowski et al., 2016)
- Know the impact of family acceptance on student well-being and ability to thrive (Craig et al., 2018; Roe, 2017; Ryan et al., 2020)
- Support families whose children are coming out by helping them navigate these important developmental milestones in ways that protect LGBTQ+ students from harm and help families stay together (Ryan et al., 2020)
- Identify LGBTQ+ community resources for students and families and assess the quality and inclusiveness of these resources before referring to such resources

Summary

School counselors promote affirmation, respect, and equal opportunity for each and every student regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. School counselors promote awareness of and education on issues related to LGBTQ+ students and encourage a safe and affirming school environment. School counselors work to eliminate barriers impeding student development and achievement and are committed to each and every student's academic, career and social/emotional development.

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AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

The School Counselor and Student Mental Health

(Adopted 2009, Revised 2015, 2020, 2025)

ASCA Position

School counselors recognize and respond to the need for mental health services that support the positive mental health development of each and every student. They collaborate with education partners, such as families, staff, administrators, decision-makers and any other school or community organizations/individuals, to raise awareness of mental health resources in an effort to ensure students receive comprehensive support both in and out of school.

The Rationale

Students' unmet mental health needs can be a significant obstacle to student academic, career and social/emotional development and even compromise individual and school safety. Mental health challenges affect one in five children and youth, yet they often go unmet, with only 25% receiving the support they need (Klassen, Stewart, Lapshina, 2021). School-based mental health services, as opposed to community-based supports, are accessed more equitably across racial and ethnic groups, highlighting the essential role of school counselors (Larsen et al., 2017). School counselors collaborate with education partners to create strategies to address social determinants of health, which requires school counselors to be knowledgeable and prepared to address systemic and structural injustices influencing students' current and future well-being (Johnson & Brookover, 2021). In addition, the full impact of COVID-19 may take decades to understand, but schools can respond to these societal changes by enhancing support services – starting with school counselors (Mitchell, 2021).

School-based mental health and behavioral services play a crucial preventive role. According to the Adolescent Behavior and Experiences Survey, nearly half of all students felt persistently sad or hopeless (CDC, 2022). Research shows that policies and programs targeting childhood mental health can improve long-term well-being and may prevent the development of mental health disorders (Bitsko et al., 2019). Without early intervention for students showing warning signs, setbacks in academic, career and social/emotional development may persist into later school years and adulthood. Adolescents are most likely to seek support first from friends for mild emotional and behavioral concerns, highlighting the critical need for youth-focused stigma reduction and basic skills in recognizing and responding to signs of distress (van den Toren et al., 2019).

The ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success (ASCA, 2025) identify and prioritize the specific knowledge, attitudes and skills students demonstrate as a result of a school counseling program. School counselors use the standards to assess student growth and development, guide the development of strategies and activities and create a program that helps students achieve their highest potential. These strategies include providing educational opportunities to enhance mental health awareness, short-term counseling interventions to promote wellness and efforts to remove barriers to success.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors design and implement school counseling programs that promote academic, career and social/emotional success for each and every student. School counselors do not diagnose but recognize how a student's diagnosis and environment can potentially affect the student's access, participation and ability to achieve academic, postsecondary and social/emotional success (ASCA, 2022).

School counselors acknowledge they may be the only counseling professional available to students and their families, particularly in rural areas. Even though some school counselors may have additional licensure to provide long-term counseling or therapy, such as the licensed professional counselor, it is inappropriate for the school counselor to provide those services, including providing individual, IEP-mandated counseling. School counselors provide culturally responsive counseling to students in a brief context and support students and families/guardians in obtaining outside services if students need long-term clinical/ mental health counseling (ASCA, 2022).

Therefore, school counselors:

- Deliver instruction based on the ASCA Student Standards that enhances awareness of mental health, promotes positive mental health and well-being, and seeks to remove the stigma associated with mental health issues
- Provide students with appraisal & advisement to address academic, career and social/emotional needs

- Recognize mental health warning signs, including:
  - changes in school performance and attendance
  - mood changes, especially if coupled with existing mental health concerns
  - school avoidance
  - psychosomatic symptoms
  - increased disciplinary problems at school
  - problems at home or with the family situation (e.g., stress, trauma, divorce, substance abuse, exposure to poverty conditions, domestic violence)
  - communication from teachers and other educational and community partners with behavioral and/or academic concerns
  - substance use
- Provide short-term counseling and crisis intervention
- Provide referrals to school and community resources that treat mental health issues (e.g., anxiety, suicidal ideation and depression) with the intent of removing barriers to learning and helping the student return to the classroom
- Provide resources and information to education partners about the mental health concerns of students, including recognition of the role environmental factors have in causing or exacerbating mental health issues
- Collaborate and coordinate with education partners and service providers (with a signed release) to meet the needs of the whole child and to ensure students and their families have access to mental health services
- Advocate for students' access to and families' awareness of Section 504 plans or IEP services supporting mental health needs
- Recognize and address barriers to accessing mental health services and the associated stigma, including cultural beliefs and language barriers
- Adhere to appropriate and evolving guidelines regarding confidentiality, consultation and the distinction between public and private information.
- Help identify and address student mental health issues while working within the:
  - ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors
  - ASCA Professional Standards & Competencies for School Counselors
  - National, state and local laws and policies, which guide school counselors' informed decision-making and standardizes professional practice to protect both the student and school counselor
- Seek to continually update their professional knowledge regarding student social/emotional needs, including best practices in universal screening for mental health risk
- Advocate for ethical use of valid and reliable universal screening instruments with concerns for cultural sensitivity and bias if state legislation or school board policy requires universal screening programs for mental health risk factors (ASCA, 2022)

School counselors design and implement school counseling programs that promote academic, career and social/emotional success for each and every student rather than providing long-term, therapeutic counseling.

Summary

Students' unmet mental health needs pose barriers to learning and development. School counselors provide short-term counseling and referral services to students and families as part of their comprehensive school counseling program. As a component of this program, school counselors collaborate with education partners to meet the needs of the whole child.

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AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

The School Counselor and Military-Connected Students

(Adopted, 2023)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors recognize military-connected students' unique and diverse needs. To support military-connected students, school counselors design and implement school counseling programs that promote an inclusive school climate, include activities and services supporting their distinct challenges and build school-family-community partnerships that create a sense of connectedness and belonging.

The Rationale

There are approximately four million military-connected students in the United States (Military Child Education Coalition, 2013; Elias, 2016). This number includes students who have parents/guardians who are either active duty, Reserves, National Guard or prior service members. Furthermore, 80% of all military-connected students attend public schools (Elias, 2016). Due to the transient nature of military service, many military families experience frequent changes and transitions, including parental deployment, relocation, familial separation and adjustment to civilian life (Cole, 2016; Ward, 2018). While such transitions can cultivate resilience, strength, and cultural awareness among military-connected students (Cole & Cowan, 2021), they can also produce stress and adversely affect their academic achievement, career readiness, and social/emotional development. When school counselors are aware of the military culture and military-connected students' specific needs, they can facilitate a comprehensive school counseling program that fosters an inclusive learning environment and aids in each and every student's success (Quintana & Cole, 2021; Ward, 2018).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors are uniquely positioned to support military-connected students' academic, career, and social/emotional development (Quintana & Cole, 2021). School counselors provide instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling to directly support success for military-connected students. Through indirect student services, school counselors collaborate with students, their families, and school and community partners to increase educational success for each and every student (ASCA, 2019). More specifically, school counselors:

- Recognize and identify distinct challenges faced by military-connected students and help mitigate their impact on students' academic, career and social/emotional development (Cole, 2016; Ruff & Keim, 2014; Ward, 2018)
- Understand the intersections of students' identities, including military culture (e.g., language, customs, etc.), and the need for culturally responsive and sustaining practices when working with military-connected students and their families (ASCA, 2022; Cole, 2014)
- Promote an inclusive school climate that includes school-family-community partnerships, connectedness and a sense of belonging for military-connected students (James, 2017; Quintana & Cole, 2021)
- Identify and provide resources for military-connected students and families, especially during unique periods such as relocations, deployments and military separation (Cole, 2016; Ward, 2018)
- Provide goal-focused, evidenced-based, short-term group and individual counseling services to address military-connected students' social/emotional needs (ASCA, 2020; Ward, 2018)
- Support the postsecondary readiness needs of military-connected students through various college- and career-focused activities (e.g., postsecondary action plans, SAT/ACT preparation, career inventories, financial aid planning, identification of gaps in college/career access, college/career advisement, etc.) (College Board, 2010; Quintana & Cole, 2021)
- Use data-informed approaches to identify academic needs and support remediation efforts for military-connected students experiencing learning loss/gaps due to transitional experiences (ASCA, 2019)
- Collaborate with military families when referring students to appropriate support services and community organizations (ASCA, 2019; Ward, 2018)
- Advocate for school policies that increase awareness, knowledge, support, and success when working with military-connected students (e.g., Military Student Identifier, Military Interstate Compact, etc.; James, 2017; Quintana & Cole, 2021)

- Consult and collaborate with installation and community partners (e.g., school liaison officer, Exceptional Family Member Program, Family Advocacy Program, etc.) to promote military-connected students' educational success (Quintana, 2021)
- Engage in and promote professional development opportunities to support military-connected students and advocate for their diverse, unique needs in schools (Quintana & Cole, 2021)

Summary

School counselors have an integral role in ensuring military-connected students feel a sense of belonging and connectedness. Effectively meeting military-connected students' needs, school counselors engage in collaborative efforts to establish a comprehensive school counseling program that is an inclusive and culturally responsive and fosters military-connected students' academic, career, and social/emotional development.

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Resources

- Military Kids Connect: https://militarykidsconnect.health.mil/
- Military One Source: www.miltaryonesource.com
- Military Child Education Coalition: www.militarychild.org
- Operation Military Kids: www.operationmilitarykids.org
- Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3): www.mic3.net
- Department of Defense Education Activity: www.dodea.edu/index.cfm
- Tutor.com: www.tutor.com
- DoD School Liaison Officer (Local Installation)
- Military and Government Counseling Association (MGCA): http://mgcaonline.org/about-us
- National Military Family Association: www.militaryfamily.org/
- Military Families United: www.militaryfamiliesunited.org/
- United Service Organization (USO): www.uso.org/

AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

The School Counselor and Multitiered System of Supports

(Adopted 2008, revised 2014, 2018, revised 2021)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors are partners in the development and implementation of multitiered system of supports (MTSS), including, but not limited to, response to intervention and responsive positive behavioral interventions and supports. School counselors align their work with MTSS through the implementation of a school counseling program designed to affect student development in the academic (achievement), career (career exploration and development) and social/emotional (behavior) domains.

The Rationale

MTSS is a culturally sustaining, evidence-based framework implemented in pre-K–12 schools using data-based problem-solving to integrate academic and behavioral instruction and intervention at tiered intensities to improve the learning and social/emotional functioning of each and every student (Sink, 2016). Guided by student-centered data, MTSS teams engage in cyclical data-based problem solving; make informed decisions about general, compensatory and special education; and assist in the creation of a well-integrated and seamless system of instruction and intervention (Ehren, Montgomery, Rudebush, & Whitmire, 2006).

Within the framework of a data-informed school counseling program, school counselors augment their collaboration, coordination and leadership skills (Shepard et al., 2013) to meet the needs of each and every student and identify students who are at risk for not meeting academic and behavioral expectations. School counselors collaborate across student service disciplines with teachers, administrators and families to design and implement plans to address student needs and to promote students' academic, career and social/emotional success (ASCA, 2019). Data is collected and analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the learning supports for continual improvement efforts over time.

MTSS offers school counselors opportunities to have a lasting impact on student academic success and behavior development while integrating the framework within a school counseling program (Ziomek-Daigle, Goodman-Scott & Donohue, 2016). The application of MTSS aligns with the role of school counseling at any grade level and can be used across the academic, college/career and/or social/emotional domains established in the ASCA National Model (Goodman-Scott et al., 2020).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors enhance student academic, career and social/emotional development through the implementation of a school counseling program based on the ASCA National Model (2019). Through these programs, school counselors align with the school's MTSS by:

- providing each and every student with standards-based school counseling instruction to address universal academic, career and social/emotional development
- analyzing academic, career and social/emotional development data to identify students who need support
- identifying and collaborating on research-based intervention strategies implemented by school staff
- evaluating academic and behavioral progress after interventions
- revising interventions as appropriate
- referring to school and community services as appropriate
- collaborating with administrators, teachers, other school professionals, community agencies and families in MTSS design and implementation
- advocating for success for each and every student and working to remove systemic barriers

School counselors align their school counseling program with MTSS by providing direct and indirect student services including:

- Tier 1 interventions in the form of classroom instruction and schoolwide programming and initiatives
- Tier 2 interventions including small-group and individual counseling, consultation and collaboration with school personnel, families and community partners
- Tier 3 indirect student support services through consultation, collaboration and facilitation of referrals (Goodman-Scott, et al., 2020).

Additionally, school counselors provide Tier 1 services by emphasizing the use of data and collaboration (Betters-Bubon et al., 2016; Betters-Bubon & Donohue, 2016; Goodman-Scott et al., 2016) and engage in evidence-based prevention work (Goodman-Scott et. al., 2014). In Tier 2, school counselors provide direct services such as targeted group counseling (Sherrod et al., 2009) and individualized interventions (e.g., check in, check out; Dart et al., 2012) (Goodman-Scott, et al., 2020). In Tier 3, typically school counselors only provide indirect services as supporters through consultation, collaboration and facilitation of referrals as members of the MTSS team (Goodman-Scott, et al., 2020).

School counselors collaboratively support the process of MTSS universal screening for mental health (Donohue et al., 2016), academic and behavioral supports. The school counselor may also provide indirect student service by presenting data or serving as a consultant to a student support team. The school counselor engages as part of the leadership team in MTSS but should not be the sole leader of MTSS in our buildings (Goodman-Scott, et al., 2020).

Summary

School counselors implement school counseling programs addressing the needs of each and every student. Guided by review of student data, school counselors deliver instruction, appraisal and advisement to students in Tier 1 and 2 and collaborate with other specialist instructional support personnel, educators and families to provide appropriate instruction and learning supports for students in Tier 2 within the school's MTSS program. School counselors also work collaboratively with other educators to remove systemic barriers that impede success for each and every student and implement specific learning supports that assist in academic and behavioral success.

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The School Counselor and the Use of Non-School-Counseling Credentialed Personnel in Implementing School Counseling Programs

(Adopted 1994, Revised 2000, 2006, 2012, 2018, 2024)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counseling programs serve a vital role in maximizing student success and positively affect achievement for each and every student. School counselors are uniquely qualified and solely eligible to meet the requirements of designing and implementing these programs and recognize that personnel who do not hold a certificate/license in school counseling are not qualified to deliver a school counseling program supporting student academic, career and social/emotional development.

The Rationale

School counselors are certified/licensed educators with a minimum of a master's degree in school counseling or equivalent. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2022), a credentialed school counselor is an individual who possesses a valid license or certificate from the state education agency in which they are employed. As a result of their training and licensure, school counselors are able to design, implement and assess a school counseling program that is integral to the school's mission and improves life-readiness and academic success for each and every student

Research shows students who attend a school with a fully implemented school counseling program earn higher grades and are better prepared for life after high school (ASCA, 2024; Mullen et al., 2019; Savitz-Romer et al., 2022). School counselors recognize students face many challenges that may place them at risk for school failure. Communities and school districts across the country are seeking solutions to these complex challenges and may establish a variety of positions to address student needs.

School districts work diligently to employ the most highly trained personnel for dealing with these issues and may employ non-school-counseling credentialed staff for specific functions. Although non-school-counseling credentialed staff members provide valuable services to students, they do not have the training or skills to design or implement a school counseling program nor are they qualified to be placed in the role of school counselor.

Non-school-counseling credentialed staff may include, but are not limited to, the following jobs:

- paraprofessionals
- peer helpers
- volunteers
- clerical support staff
- student assistance team members
- social workers, psychologists
- nurses
- mentors
- mental health counselors including marriage and family counselors, social/emotional coaches and day treatment workers
- college or graduation coaches/academic advisors
- behavior support specialists
- deans/assistant deans of students
- chaplains/clergy

The services non-school-counseling credentialed personnel provide must be clearly defined based on the individual's training and skills. Without appropriate training and skills, individuals with the best of intentions may provide inappropriate responses or interventions to students that could jeopardize students' development and well-being.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors recognize student needs can best be met through the collaborative efforts of all school personnel (Griffiths et al., 2021) and encourage non-school-counseling credentialed personnel to accept only positions for which they are qualified. When non-school-counseling credentialed personnel are performing interventions or prevention activities, these activities should be limited to the scope of the individual's training and licensure.

School counselors work with administrators, teachers and staff to set up suitable protocols, duties and oversight for non-school-counseling credentialed personnel and the programs they offer. It is important for both school counselors and non-school-counseling credentialed staff to be mindful of who is providing services to students to prevent redundancy in services and maintain integrity of each of the specific roles and qualifications.

School counselors follow legal requirements and ethical guidelines including:

- Accepting only positions for which they are qualified
- Adhering to laws, policies and ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors
- Addressing biases, understanding oppression and promoting social justice
- Staying updated through professional organizations
- Engaging in continuous professional development (ASCA, 2019; ASCA, 2022)

When referring students to non-school-counseling credential staff, school counselors inform students and families of these staff members' role within the school. The school counselor may also provide information related to the individual's education level and scope of practice.

Summary

School counselors play an important role in students' academic, career and social/emotional development. Non-school-counseling credentialed individuals do not have the training or skills to design or implement a school counseling program, nor are they qualified to be placed in the role of the school counselor. School counselors collaborate with administrators, teachers and staff to establish appropriate guidelines and supervision of services provided by non-school-counseling credentialed personnel and make referrals to these individuals as appropriate for the student.

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The School Counselor and Peer Support Programs

(Adopted 1978; Revised 1984, 1993, 1999, 2002, 2008, 2015, 2021, 2026)

ASCA Position

Peer support programs help students develop a belief in self, provide a sense of community and improve social/emotional well-being. The informed implementation of peer support programs enhances the effectiveness of school counseling programs and provides a collaborative approach to positive life-readiness and mental health development.

The Rationale

Peer support programs can be defined as peer-to-peer interactions in which trained and supervised individuals of approximately the same age take on a helping role, assisting students who may share similar experiences. Peer support programs include activities such as assisting with one-to-one and group interventions, providing academic support, acclimating new students and other activities. In addition, peer support programs improve academic achievement and social networks through restorative justice initiatives and social/emotional learning (Roberts, 2022; Williams et al., 2018).

School counselors are aware that students often communicate more readily with peers than with adults. Peer support programs can enhance the effectiveness of school counseling programs by increasing outreach and raising student awareness of services. Through proper selection, training and supervision, peer support can be a positive influence within the school and community. Research indicates peer support programs are helpful when focused on assisting students with academic or social/emotional problems (Logsdon, et al., 2018), while promoting protective factors (Search Institute, 2006). Peer support programs can also help create a positive school culture and connectedness to the school community for both mentors and mentees (Voight & Nation, 2016; Roberts, 2020) as well as safer schools (Walker, 2019).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors use best practices to determine the needs of the school population and to implement interventions designed to meet those needs, such as peer support programs. In collaboration with school staff, school counselors:

- Follow the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors as they relate to peer support programs, including safeguarding the welfare of students participating in peer support programs and providing appropriate training and supervision for peer helpers (ASCA, 2022; QPR, 2019)
- Develop a recruitment process that meets a specific peer leader criteria (Crist, 2024) and is representative of the student body
- Train students to be well-versed in the mandated reporter laws to know when to refer their peers or mentees to the school counselor (Roberts, 2020) according to the school site's reporting protocol
- Communicate program goals and purpose, then supervise, assess and adjust the program on a continual basis to meet the needs of the school population the program serves
- Report results to students and education partners (e.g., teachers, administrators, families, community)

Summary

School counselors understand and build upon the positive effects of peer support programs on students, the school climate and culture, as well as the school connectedness of students involved. School counselors also understand their unique responsibilities when peer-support programs are implemented, including ensuring students are properly trained, supervised, and supported in their role.

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The School Counselor and Appraisal and Advisement for Postsecondary Preparation

(Adopted 1994, Revised 2000, 2006, 2012, 2013, 2017, 2024)

Note: This statement was previously titled The School Counselor and Individual Student Planning for Postsecondary Education.

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors design, implement and assess a school counseling program that includes student appraisal and advisement to help students understand their abilities, values and career interests and to attain the ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success. This two-part process results in school counselors working collaboratively to ensure each and every student develops an academic and career plan that includes rigorous and relevant coursework and reflects their individual interests, abilities, short- and long-term goals, cultural beliefs, along with other factors.

The Rationale

Appraisal is the process where school counselors work with students to analyze and assess their abilities, interests, skills and achievement. Advisement is the process through which school counselors make recommendations based on review of tests, inventories and other data to help students make decisions for their future (ASCA, 2019).

Academic and college/career planning provides students with the opportunity to identify strengths, areas in need of improvement and areas of interest early in their education so students and their families can set postsecondary goals and make informed choices that support achieving their desired goals (Conley, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 2014). College and career readiness begins as early as preschool or kindergarten to prepare students for a wide array of postsecondary experiences without the need for remediation and to ensure each and every student possesses the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to qualify for and succeed in their chosen field.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors take a proactive role in providing appraisal and advisement to students as a part of the school counseling program. They help students, families and staff assess the individual student's strengths and interests and encourage the selection of a rigorous and relevant educational program supporting each student's postsecondary goals.

School counselors provide activities such as the following in support of these outcomes:

- Foster a school culture that acknowledges, respects and celebrates student diversity, cultures and beliefs throughout the appraisal and advisement process
- Align appraisal and advisement activities and procedures with state and district policies
- Facilitate student exploration of their strengths, interests and abilities in relation to knowledge of self and the world of work
- Use tests, inventories and other data to support students' decision-making about their future
- Provide opportunities for students to demonstrate skills needed for success in academic and postsecondary goals
- Facilitate co-curricular/extracurricular opportunities aligned with students' goals
- Help students make connections between coursework and life experiences
- Guide course selections that allow students the opportunity to choose from a wide range of postsecondary options

Summary

School counselors design, implement and assess a school counseling program that includes appraisal and advisement for each and every student to assist them in reaching their academic, career and social/emotional goals. School counselors collaborate with school staff, families and the community to ensure each and every student has the opportunity to design a rigorous and relevant academic and career program that will prepare them to achieve their postsecondary goals.

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The School Counselor and Student Postsecondary Recruitment

(Adopted 2004; revised 2009, 2015, 2021)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors encourage and promote positive and equitable reception of career and postsecondary educational institution recruiters into the school setting. These recruiters may include individuals from organizations such as, but not limited to:

- apprenticeship programs
- athletic programs
- career and technical education institutions
- colleges and universities
- financial aid and scholarship programs
- military branches

The Rationale

The K–12 educational system is an important component of the national structure that prepares students for the world of work (Cushing et al., 2019) and is essential for students as they explore postsecondary career and educational options. Every student has the right to access instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling for postsecondary preparation, access and success (ASCA, 2019).

Through implementation of a school counseling program aligned with the ASCA National Model, school counselors deliver information on postsecondary career and college options and collaborate with school staff, families and youth programs to maximize success (Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2010; Bryan, et al., 2017; Holcomb-McCoy, 2010). School counselors help each and every student understand the benefits of completing their K–12 education including (a) exposure to and preparation for college and career opportunities, (b) support for navigating the financial aid process to ensure college is an affordable reality and (c) access to enrichment and extracurricular activities including summer learning opportunities.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors are advocates for students in the recruitment process and ensure students and their families are informed of their rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and in accordance with the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016). School counselors provide and advocate for postsecondary awareness, exploration and planning for each student, thereby supporting students' rights to choose from a wide array of options when they leave secondary education. School counselors also examine data to ensure students from underrepresented groups, such as students of various racial and ethnic backgrounds, students with disabilities and students who are LGBTQ+ are provided equitable access to college and career programs and information.

Through instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling, school counselors guide each and every student through the postsecondary planning and recruitment process, helping them learn critical strategies and skills for success including:

- setting long- and short-term goals
- making informed decisions
- managing transitions (ASCA, 2019)

Through consultation and collaboration, school counselors play a critical role in bridging communication gaps between families and recruitment entities. School counselors consult and collaborate with education partners, including:

- college access partners and recruiters to prepare information for students and families about the differences among public, independent and for-profit colleges and universities in relationship to the costs and outcomes
- recruiters to encourage them to create informational sessions and activities for families
- school administrators to develop and disseminate written information about the policies and procedures for obtaining student information as well as the rights of students and parents/guardians to withhold their information
- families to understand waivers for release of information

- families and students to encourage open conversation and communication about interests and goals
- recruiters and families to encourage them to work directly with students

Summary

School counselors assist students and their families as they make informed decisions about postsecondary options. School counselors collaborate with individuals involved in the student recruitment process to ensure the delivery of comprehensive, accurate information while protecting student rights as specified by state/federal law, school district policies and procedures, and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors.

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The School Counselor and Retention, Social Promotion and Age-Appropriate Placement

(Adopted 2006, revised 2012, 2017, 2023)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors recognize that decisions on student retention, promotion and placement are best made when the student's needs are at the forefront of the decision and after considering multiple factors. School counselors also recognize that retention and social promotion decisions have a disproportionate impact on students from culturally, linguistically and otherwise diverse backgrounds. School counselors oppose laws or policies requiring social promotion or retention and advocate for laws and policies that consider individual student needs regarding age-appropriate placement.

The Rationale

The evidence about the academic benefits of grade retention is mixed, but the effects on the psychosocial outcomes of children who are retained are mostly negative (Cockx et al., 2018; Goos et al., 2021; Hughes et al., 2017; Pipa & Peixoto, 2022; Valbuena et al., 2021). Even though some states and school districts have instituted laws or policies requiring mandatory retention or promotion of students who do not achieve academic standards, other interventions, such as transitional classes, frequent progress monitoring, peer tutoring and individualized interventions delivered through a multitiered system of supports, show more academic promise for students who have difficulty learning (ASCA, 2021; Peguero et al., 2021).

Research shows negative, long-term effects from retention with a disproportionate impact on marginalized populations. Students who are retained are more likely to have adverse outcomes, including dropping out of school and having diminished postsecondary aspirations (Cockx et al., 2018; Hughes et al., 2018), having lower socioeconomic status and more likely to be eligible for government assistance (Goos et al., 2021), and are even at higher risk for future criminal behavior (Eren et al., 2022). Pipa and Peixoto (2022) found that retained students have lower task orientation, sense of school belonging and valuing, hypothesizing that this could lower motivation, which begins a cascade of negative outcomes. Grade-retention policies have a disproportionate effect on students from marginalized populations (de Brey et al., 2019; Lavy et al., 2012; Peguero et al., 2021; Pipa & Peixoto, 2022; Valbuena et al., 2021; Xiang & Chiu, 2022).

Social promotion is defined as the practice of passing students along from grade to grade with peers even if the students have not satisfied academic requirements or met performance standards at designated grade levels. While social promotion is seen as the only alternative to grade retention, there are more effective alternatives to both (Jacobs & Mantiri, 2022). Although social promotion is intended to avoid the negative effects of grade retention and promote self-esteem, research on social promotion mostly shows that it is no more effective or less harmful than grade retention (McMahon, 2018). It can also lower the student's or others' expected standards of student achievement and/or can give students and their parents a false sense of accomplishment.

Neither retention nor social promotion has been proven effective in remediation of learning difficulties or in maintaining academic gains (Goos et al., 2021; McMahon, 2018). In cases where students have academic difficulty, early intervention is crucial, as well as is differentiating instruction to help students reach their potential. Additionally, improved teaching strategies, curriculum enhancements and focused, evidenced-based interventions have been demonstrated to be effective for student success and are less costly (Peguero et al., 2021).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors have a professional and ethical obligation to protect students from practices hindering academic, career and social/emotional development and advocate for preventive, proactive alternatives to such practices (ASCA, 2022a; ASCA, 2023a). School counselors are aware of the detrimental effects of grade retentions and social promotions on students, schools and the community and advocate for the repeal of laws or policies promoting mandatory retentions or social promotion. School counselors share educational and social research with students, families, the community and decision makers so the decisions related to promotion and retention are made in the students' best interest.

When laws and/or policies require social promotion or retention, school counselors refer to the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (ASCA, 2022a) to support students' academic, career and social/emotional development. School counselors advocate for alternate interventions first, before recommending retention of a student.

School counselors promote alternatives to retention, social promotion and age-appropriate placement by supporting and advocating for the following:

- Research-based educational reforms that deliver best teaching and school counseling practice (ASCA, 2022)
- Comprehensive school counseling programs in all schools to address academic, career and social/emotional development (ASCA, 2023b)
- Early identification using available data to identify strengths and deficits to provide appropriate evidenced-based interventions (ASCA, 2023a)
- A team approach to decision-making that includes school counselors, teachers, administrators, student support workers and families to determine appropriate educational interventions (ASCA, 2021)
- Career and technical education opportunities for middle and high school students (ASCA, 2018)
- Literacy strategies to improve reading for each and every student
- Funding for pre-kindergarten programs taught by credentialed teachers (Bakken et al., 2017)
- Extended school year for remediation and curriculum enhancement for struggling learners and under-challenged learners
- Reduced class size
- Increased family engagement and volunteer involvement in schools (ASCA, 2022b)
- Education of families on research-based reading strategies to assist their children in developing academic skills

Summary

Research shows the negative impact retention and social promotion can have on student success. School counselors collaborate with students, families, teachers and educational leaders to consider the individual student's needs when making decisions on retention and social promotion and advocate to change laws or policies promoting mandatory retentions or social promotion.

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AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

The School Counselor and Safe Schools and Crisis Response

(Adopted 2000; revised 2007, 2013, 2019, 2025)

ASCA Position

School counselors lead safe school initiatives to create a positive school climate, working collaboratively to promote life-readiness and academic success for each and every student. Schoolwide safety programming benefits the overall school community by promoting positive mental health development, strong relationships and effective crisis prevention, intervention and response.

The Rationale

Crises can affect individual students, schools and the overall community. Crises are traumatic for students and can have an adverse impact on their academic and social/emotional development (McDonald & Fenderson, 2024). Each and every student needs a physically and emotionally safe environment for learning, and school counselors are uniquely positioned to lead and collaborate on safe school initiatives by providing effective crisis prevention, intervention and response (Charlton et al., 2021). Therefore, it is necessary for school counselors to understand trauma and implement trauma-informed practices to effectively meet students' needs.

A crisis management plan is the most effective way to prepare for a crisis, as it helps to ensure school staff understand their roles and how they are to respond (McDonald & Fenderson, 2024). School counselors understand that plan and are equipped to respond to crises by providing counseling to students; consulting and collaborating with families, teachers, administrators and other education partners; disseminating resources; and making referrals as needed (McGough & Mylroie, 2024; Ellington et al., 2023).

Furthermore, school connectedness has been identified as a protective factor for promoting safety for students both in school and outside of school (Goetschius, et al., 2021). When students can identify at least one trusted adult within school, they feel better connected to the school environment and may feel comfortable sharing any concerns related to safety. Additionally, engaging with students and being accessible and available to them throughout the school day increases the likelihood that safety concerns can be identified and addressed accordingly (Ellington, et al., 2023). School counselors are well-equipped to sustain healthy relationships with students that foster wellness and student success.

The School Counselor's Role

Through the implementation of a school counseling program, school counselors promote school safety, avail themselves for disclosure of threats, redirect students engaging in unhealthy or unsafe behaviors, promote positive mental health development and make mental health referrals as needed. School counselors are familiar with the school community and knowledgeable about the roles of community mental health providers, which helps them connect students to proper support (Ellington, et al., 2023).

To support essential crisis prevention and response preparedness practices, school counselors:

- Provide classroom instruction and individual and small-group counseling promoting positive mental health development and school safety
- Are accessible and available to students in an effort to foster engagement and identify concerns related to safety
- Provide interventions for students at risk of dropping out or harming self or others
- Foster safe and connected school environments by building rapport with students
- Assess school climate to determine perceptions and beliefs about crisis management and school safety
- Participate in district and school response team planning and practices and help ensure resources are available for students and staff to process/understand crisis response drills
- Advocate for student safety by recommending that school personnel put consistent procedures, communication and policies in place
- Collaborate with school administration to report and address any concerns
- Offer conflict resolution programs, anti-bullying programs and peer-mediation supports
- Support student-initiated programs such as Students Against Violence Everywhere

- Implement family, faculty and staff education programs
- Facilitate open communication between students and caring adults
- Defuse critical incidents and provide related stress debriefing
- Identify and support students with mental health concerns
- Promote trauma-informed practices
- Advocate for restorative justice programs
- Partner with community resources, particularly those that can provide information, support and services during and after community crises
- Implement safe reporting procedures that protect confidentiality, privacy and anonymity

(Ellington, et al., 2023; Garran & Rasmussen, 2014; Rajan & Branas, 2018; Swartz et al., 2016)

School counselors engage in roles congruent with their training. When school counselors use risk assessment or universal screeners, they follow ethical guidelines and adhere to any district, local, state and federal law. Additionally, school counselors avoid engaging in roles during drills that are incompatible with the school counseling role, such as acting as the school shooter/invader and trying to get into locked rooms to test that teachers and students are following protocol.

Summary

School counselors are leaders in safe school initiatives that promote a positive school climate. They actively engage in fostering safety for each and every student and responding to critical response situations in schools. School counselors are a vital resource in preventing, intervening and responding to crises.

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The School Counselor and School Counselor Preparation Programs

(Adopted 2008, Revised 2014, 2020, 2026)

ASCA Position

School counselors are best prepared through master's-level programs that align with the philosophy and vision of the ASCA National Model®, the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies, the ASCA Standards for School Counselor Program Preparation, the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselor Education Faculty and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors. These programs emphasize training that helps ensure school counselors are equipped to establish, maintain and enhance a school counseling program that enhances life-readiness and academic success.

The Rationale

School counselor preparation programs are vital to the appropriate development of future school counselors. School counselor preparation programs equip school counseling students to address student needs by integrating professional and ethical standards into the design, implementation and assessment of school counseling programs. These programs ensure emerging school counselors can lead programs that promote success for each and every student (ASCA, 2024; Gilfillan et al., 2026).

The Impact on Emerging School Counselors

Effective school counselor preparation programs provide education that equips school counseling students to design, implement and assess school counseling programs in the pre-K–12 setting. These programs help students develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to demonstrate the following:

Professional Foundation – School counseling graduates are able to:

- Apply education and counseling knowledge, theories, principles, standards and competencies to inform the development and implementation of a school counseling program
- Apply knowledge of cultural, social and environmental influences to enhance student success and opportunities
- Provide leadership, advocacy and collaboration to create systemic change that enhances student success and opportunities

Direct and Indirect Student Services – School counseling graduates are able to provide:

- Direct services to students including the continuum of classroom instruction, appraisal & advisement (Tier 1) and small-group and individual counseling (Tier 2). Direct services enhance student access, life-readiness and academic success through delivery of the ASCA Student Standards.
- Indirect services on behalf of students including referrals, consultation and collaboration provided on behalf of students through the school counselor's interactions with others (Tiers 1, 2 and 3).

Planning and Assessment – School counseling graduates are able to:

- Articulate how the school counseling program aligns with the school and district vision and mission
- Identify achievement gaps
- Develop achievement gap plans based on student data
- Assess and report program impact
- Use time appropriately aligned with national recommendations
- Establish agreement about the school counseling program with the administrator in charge of the program
- Convene an advisory council for the school counseling program
- Use an appropriate school counselor performance appraisal process
- (ASCA, 2025b; Dollarhide et al, 2021; Goodman-Scott et al., 2023)

Field-based experiences are essential to school counselor preparation. These experiences should provide training aligned with the school counselor preparation program and further develop the students' knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to implement a school counseling program. Field-based experiences are supervised by a fully licensed or certified school counselor in the pre-K–12 setting and a university supervisor with the appropriate school counselor educator qualifications.

School counselor preparation programs are facilitated by school counselor educators who have the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to prepare school counselors to promote each and every student's academic, career and social/emotional development. School counselor educators have appropriate preparation and experience to understand and teach current issues and trends in school counseling. School counselor educators should hold an earned doctoral degree in counselor education, counseling psychology, educational leadership or a closely related field. Adjunct faculty/instructors will minimally have a master's degree in school counseling and have significant school counseling experience. All university instructors should have experience as an employed school counselor.

Summary

School counselor preparation programs emphasize the development of the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed by emerging school counselors to implement effective school counseling programs that empower each and every student to succeed and achieve in their pre-K–12 experiences. These programs align with the philosophy of the ASCA National Model®, the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies, the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselor Education Faculty and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors. School counselor educators have the appropriate education, training, experience and commitment to prepare school counselors to respond to the changing expectations and dynamics of students, families, schools and communities.

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AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

The School Counselor and School Counseling Programs

(Adopted 1988; revised 1993, 1997, 2005, 2012, 2017, 2023)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors design, implement and assess a school counseling program that improves life-readiness and academic success for each and every student. "The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs" outlines the components of a school counseling program and brings school counselors together with one vision and one voice, creating unity and focus toward improving student achievement and supporting student development.

The Rationale

The school counseling program is comprehensive in scope, preventive in design and developmental in nature and is an integral component of the school's mission. Informed by student data and based on the ASCA National Model, school counseling programs are provided by a state-credentialed school counselor and:

- Are delivered to each and every student systematically
- Include a developmentally appropriate curriculum focused on the mindsets and behaviors each and every student needs for postsecondary readiness and success
- Close achievement and opportunity gaps
- Result in improved life-readiness and student achievement

School counseling programs improve a range of student learning and behavioral outcomes (Savitz-Romer et al, 2022). Effective school counseling programs are a collaborative effort between the school counselor, families, community partners, and other educators to create an environment resulting in a positive impact on life-readiness and student achievement. Education professionals, including school counselors, value and respond to the diversity and individual differences in our societies and communities in culturally sensitive and responsive ways. School counseling programs in both the brick-and-mortar and virtual settings ensure equitable access to opportunities and rigorous curriculum for each and every student to participate fully in the educational process.

Research shows that schools designated as Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) schools had significantly higher schoolwide proficiency rates in English as compared with the control schools (Mullen et al., 2019). This same study also found that when schools reduce the student-to-school counselor ratio to ASCA's recommended 250:1, students who receive free and reduced lunch at high-poverty schools achieve improved academic outcomes (Mullen et al., 2019).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors focus their skills, time, and energy on direct and indirect services to each and every student as well as program planning and school support. To achieve maximum program effectiveness, ASCA recommends a student-to-school-counselor ratio of 250:1. Although ratios vary across states, school districts and even grade levels, the growing body of research supports that implementation of school counseling programs positively affects student data (e.g., student achievement and discipline referrals) at all grade levels (Lancaster et al, 2021).

The ASCA National Model recommends that school counselors spend 80% or more of their time in direct and indirect services to students. These direct and indirect activities should come from the duties appropriate to the role of the school counselor rather than inappropriate duties assigned to school counselors as listed in the ASCA National Model Executive Summary (2019b). Twenty percent or less of the school counselor's time should be focused on program planning and school support including:

- Reviewing school data
- Developing achievement gap goals
- Creating lesson plans, small group plans achievement gap plans
- Reporting results of lessons, small groups and achievement gap plans to the school community
- Discussing the priorities of the school counseling program in the annual administrator conference

Duties that fall outside of the school counselor's role as described in the ASCA National Model should be limited and performed by other school staff to support a school's smooth operation and allow school counselors to continue to focus on students' academic, career, and social/emotional needs. Fair-share responsibilities should not preclude implementing, managing and accessing a school counseling program.

School counselors participate as members of the educational team and use the skills of leadership, advocacy, and collaboration to promote systemic change. The framework of a school counseling program consists of the following four components: define, manage, deliver and assess. See "The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs" for more detailed information.

DEFINE
Three sets of school counseling standards define the school counseling profession. These standards help new and experienced school counselors develop, implement and assess their school counseling program to improve student achievement.

Student Standards
- ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success

Professional Standards
- ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors
- ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies

MANAGE
To be delivered effectively, the school counseling program must be efficiently and effectively managed. The ASCA National Model provides school counselors with the following program focus and planning tools to guide the design and implementation of a school counseling program that gets results.

Program Focus and Planning
- Beliefs
- School Counseling Program Data Priorities
- Achievement Gap Plans
- Lesson Plans
- Small Group Plans
- Achievement Gap Plans
- Annual Administrators Conference
- Use of Time
- Calendars
  - Annual
  - Weekly
- Advisory Council

DELIVER
School counselors deliver a school counseling program in collaboration with and education partners. The ASCA National Model (2025a) and the ASCA National Model: A Step-by-Step Guide (2025b) have specific details and examples about each of the following areas:

Direct Services with Students
Direct services are face-to-face or virtual interactions between school counselors and students and include the following:
- Instruction
- Appraisal and Advisement
- Counseling

Indirect Services for Students
Indirect services are provided on behalf of students as a result of the school counselors' interactions with others including:
- Consultation
- Collaboration
- Referrals

ASSESS

To achieve the best results for students, school counselors regularly assess their program to:

- Determine its effectiveness
- Inform improvements to their school counseling program design and delivery
- Show how student growth and progress are different as a result of the school counseling program

Annually, an experienced administrator completes the school counselor performance appraisal to evaluate the school counselor's overall performance. Appraisal documents are often developed in alignment with state or district guidelines and may appear in a variety of frameworks selected by state and district leaders.

Essential components of performance appraisal include evidence of:

- Design of a school counseling program
- Data-informed goals along with the measured impact of direct services delivery
- Data-informed classroom, small-group and achievement gap activities and interventions
- Calendars reflecting appropriate use of time aligned with ASCA National Model recommendation of a minimum of 80% of time in direct and indirect services to students
- Collection and analysis of results data from lessons, small groups and achievement gap plan activities and interventions

Summary

School counselors in both in-person and virtual/online environments develop and deliver school counseling programs that promote life-readiness and academic success for each and every student and standardize the assessment of program effectiveness. As outlined in the ASCA National Model, these programs include a systematic and planned program delivery that promotes success for each and every student and enhancing the learning process. The school counseling program is supported by appropriate resources and implemented by a credentialed school counselor. The ASCA National Model brings school counselors together with one vision and one voice, creating unity and focus toward improving student achievement and supporting student development.

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The School Counselor and Supervision

(Adopted 2021; 2026)

ASCA Position

School counselors engage in quality supervision during their training and professional practice to enhance the implementation of the school counseling program. Supervision by individuals who have a background in school counseling and supervision training enhances school counselors' professional growth and leadership development in their roles as practitioners and potential supervisors.

The Rationale

School counselors, including those in training, engage in supervision as part of their ethical and professional responsibility to support the delivery of school counseling programs that promote academic, career and social/emotional development for each and every student (ASCA, 2025a, 2025b). Supervision is distinct from administrative evaluation and is grounded in professional standards that prioritize student welfare, ethical practice and continuous improvement.

School counselors pursue consultation and supervision in their school counselor training program and throughout their professional career to strengthen their school counseling skills and remain culturally supportive and ethically compliant (ASCA, 2019, 2020, 2022). Supervision provides opportunities for school counseling students, novice school counselors and experienced school counselors to develop and refine the skills required to address the needs of each and every student (Bultsma, 2021). Supervision is also helpful in adapting to changing cultural, developmental and environmental demands.

School counseling ethical and professional standards highlight the need for school counselors to seek supervision and training as supervisors (ASCA, 2019, 2020). Effective supervision draws on supervision models specific to school counseling, ethics, social justice, professional development, leadership, advocacy and other professional roles (ASCA, 2019, 2020, 2023; Hilts & Levy, 2025). Trained school counselor supervisors provide necessary professional development that supports school counselors and school counseling students to be well-prepared, skilled and competent practitioners (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019; Brown & Carrola, 2022).

The School Counselor's Role

Effective school counselor supervision is an intensive, interpersonally focused, individual or small-group intervention delivered by a more senior member of the profession to a junior member to facilitate continued professional growth (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019).

School counselors who serve in a supervisory role:

- Establish expectations and structures that support supervisees' active engagement and meaningful participation in the supervision process, recognizing supervision as a collaborative and developmental professional practice (Miserentino & Hannon, 2022).
- Maintain appropriate credentialing and demonstrate expertise in school counseling (ASCA, 2019, 2022)
- Provide supervision grounded in school-counseling-specific knowledge, including the appropriate role and scope of school counseling practice (Bledsoe et al., 2021)
- Promote the implementation of school counseling programs aligned with the ASCA National Model® (ASCA, 2022, 2024)
- Model ethical decision-making and ensure adherence to the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (ASCA, 2022)
- Serve as professional gatekeepers who monitor school counselor candidates' development and address any concerns that could affect their professional practice (ASCA, 2024)
- Engage in ongoing professional development (ASCA, 2025a; Mecadon-Mann & Tuttle, 2023; Um & Bardhoshi, 2024)
- Remain current on school counseling research, trends and best practices (Taylor et al., 2023)

School counselors who serve as site supervisors or mentors uphold standards of integrity, leadership and professionalism while supporting supervisees. In alignment with ethical standards, supervisors collaborate with school counselor preparation programs to promote supervision practices that are developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive and consistent with professional expectations (ASCA, 2019, 2022).

School counselor supervisors must have the following qualifications:

- School counseling licensure or certification with an understanding of school counseling programs and school counselors' ethical practices
- A minimum of two years of professional experience within school counseling
- Relevant training in school counselor supervision

(ASCA, 2022; Neyland-Brown, et al., 2019)

Summary

School counselor supervision supports the ongoing personal and professional development of practicing school counselors and school counseling students in the knowledge and skills required to deliver effective school counseling programs. Supervision focuses on the development of school counseling skills and the integration of school counselor standards and competencies in practice. School counselor supervisors have the appropriate background, experience and training needed to prepare school counselors to meet the needs and challenges of students, families, schools, colleagues and communities.

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The School Counselor and School-Family-Community Partnerships

(Adopted 2010; Revised 2016, 2022)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors have an essential and unique role in promoting, facilitating and advocating for collaboration with education partners including parents/guardians and community organizations. These collaborations are an important aspect of implementing school counseling programs that promote each and every student's successful academic, career and social/emotional development.

The Rationale

The ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2025a) and the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies (ASCA, 2025b) endorse school counselors' roles in facilitating school-family-community partnerships. School counselors are trained in counseling, human relations and collaboration skills (e.g., group dynamics, consultation skills), which makes them well-suited to engage families and other education partners, and they enhance the collaboration of school-family-community partners by being the catalyst through which these collaborations occur (Bryan et al., 2017). Family involvement benefits both the student and the school, as it increases student achievement and attendance, promotes career development, enhances school climate and fosters student resilience (Castillo, 2022).

The School Counselor's Role

In establishing school and community partnerships, school counselors work with students, their families, school staff and community members. In fostering partnerships, school counselors:

- Actively pursue collaboration with family members and other education partners
- Promote student academic, career and social/emotional development
- Encompass existing school, family and community strengths, resources and assets (Bryan et al., 2020)
- Inform the school community about relevant community resources
- Foster resilience through equity-based school-family-community partnerships and parent-family-school agreements based on empowerment, democracy, collaboration, social justice and strength-based principles (Bryan et al., 2020).
- Work to end racism/bias by collaborating with families, educators, businesses and community organizations focused on anti-racism/bias (ASCA, 2021)

Focusing on family and community partnerships in schools is an important aspect to culturally responsive education (Castillo, 2022). School counselors serve as leaders, advocates, collaborators, facilitators, initiators and evaluators to create, enrich and assess the effect of these partnerships on student success within the school counseling program.

Summary

School counselors work to improve student outcomes through the facilitation of school-family-community partnerships. School-family-community partnerships have increased students' successful academic, career and social/emotional development. School counselors are called on to create, lead, facilitate and assess these partnerships and work to remove barriers to these helpful collaborative relationships.

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The School Counselor and School Resource Officers

(Adopted 2023)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors are leaders, advocates, collaborators, and consultants who create systemic change success for each and every student through the school counseling program. School counselors collaborate and advocate with school resource officers (SROs) to ensure safety and success for each and every student.

The Rationale

The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO, n.d.) defines an SRO as, "a carefully selected, specifically trained and properly equipped law enforcement officer with sworn authority, trained in school-based law enforcement and crisis response, and assigned by an employing law enforcement agency to work collaboratively with one or more schools using community-oriented policing concepts" (para. 2). Despite a lack of evidence on the long-term effect that the presence of SROs has on student outcomes, many school districts continue to utilize SROs with the goal to increase safety in schools.

SROs contribute to safety "by ensuring a safe and secure campus, educating students about law-related topics, and mentoring students as counselors and role models" (NASRO, 2012, p. 21). School counselors are also leaders in safe school initiatives and serve as active participants in fostering safety in schools.

The most prominent concern regarding SROs in schools is a lack of consistency in training and cohesion with program design and implementation. This lack of consistency can lead "to conflict and misunderstanding that can have negative consequences for students and schools" (Fisher et al., 2022 p. 562).

Evidence presented against SRO positions is centered on concerns that the SRO presence contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline. Research shows "the presence of a school resource officer increases the likelihood that students will be disciplined and arrested for offenses that were once resolved through non-legal means by school staff and administration" (Almanza et al., 2022, p. 2). This evidence, however, does not apply only to SROs as, "It is difficult to discern SROs' impact on or contribution to the school-to-prison link" because "such a pipeline features numerous education partners, including administrators, teachers and staff, who might also contribute to this critical issue" (Paez & Colvin, 2021, p. 192).

The School Counselor's Role

Through the school counseling program, school counselors advocate for school safety and success for each and every student and collaborate to remove barriers that may impede academic success. As systemic change agents, school counselors:

- Advocate that in districts where they are employed, SROs follow the guidelines, training and education recommended by NASRO
- Advocate for uniformity in SRO programming (Almanza et al., 2022) and that school administrators and district leaders follow the memorandum of understanding, which outlines the "tasks to be performed by the SRO when assisting school officials in providing a safe and effective learning environment" (NASRO, 2012, p. 47)
- Collaborate with administrators, teams and school staff, including SROs, to prevent violence on campus
- Work with SROs to educate the school community about collaborative services designed to meet students' needs
- Engage in a collaborative problem-solving model with SROs to meet student needs to deliver a community approach to problem-solving, as opposed to traditional legal responses (Fisher et al., 2022)
- Consult with SROs to inform school counselor interventions with students in need of support
- Educate the school community on best practices that build positive relationships between SROs and students and families (Fisher et al., 2022)

Summary

While the research regarding the impact of the presence of SROs on student outcomes is divided, in schools where SROs are employed, it is the school counselor's responsibility to advocate, collaborate, and educate to ensure equal opportunities and safety and success for each and every student.

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The School Counselor and Section 504 Plan and Process

(Adopted 2024)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors are an integral part of the Section 504 team for students on their caseload, and they provide a vital role as student advocates. Although school counselors serve on the 504 team, they should not be tasked with 504 coordination/management to avoid a conflict between school counseling program implementation and the administrative duties of the 504 coordinator/case manager.

The Rationale

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is federal legislation overseen by the Office of Civil Rights that protects the rights of students with disabilities and eliminates discrimination based on disability. Section 504 mandates equitable access to a "free and appropriate public education" and ensures appropriate and reasonable accommodations are in place to meet students' educational needs. According to Section 504, the term "disability" is broadly defined as any "physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities" (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). A plan written to accommodate a Section 504 disability (i.e., 504 plan) is a legally binding document, and all members involved in the writing of that plan should be adequately trained in understanding the process and legal requirements (Milsom & DeWeese, 2021).

School counselors may be the first contact for concerned parents/guardians, students or teachers. School counselors serve as advocates, supporting students and families through the Section 504 process while increasing access to the process for families traditionally marginalized due to their race, culture or socioeconomic status (Lewis & Muniz, 2023). To best meet students' holistic needs, an interdisciplinary team of school personnel (e.g., administrator, school counselor, school nurse, teachers, interventionist) should be involved in the evaluation and identification process and, if deemed necessary, determine appropriate accommodations for the student to access the curriculum (Milson & DeWees, 2021). School counselors on the 504 team should also actively work to dismantle systemic inequities within the identification or accommodation process (Lewis & Muniz, 2023).

Initiating, writing, coordinating and managing the 504 process are non-school- counseling tasks and inappropriate duties for a school counselor (ASCA, 2019). The coordination/case management of Section 504 plans creates multiple role conflicts for school counselors, including:

Conflict with responsibilities to each and every student in the school: School counselors develop and implement a school counseling program for each and every student, including students with disabilities. Placing school counselors in the role of the 504 coordinator/case manager forces them to put a significant amount of time into the needs of a small number of students rather than using that time to meet the academic, career and social/emotional needs of each and every student (ASCA, 2019).

Conflict with the role of student advocate: When school counselors are placed in the 504 coordination/case manager role, they are responsible for deciding what accommodations are provided to the student, if any. This authority over services directly conflicts with the school counselor being primarily an advocate and providing student support. It may impair the ability of the school counselor to create or maintain a strong counseling relationship (Goodman-Scott & Boulden, 2020).

Conflict with staff and teachers: School counselors acting as the 504 coordinator/case manager may experience role conflict with staff and teachers as they are required to oversee implementation and ensure compliance with the 504 plan. This evaluative stance may undermine the school counselor's collaborative relationship with faculty and staff (Goodman-Scott & Boulden, 2020).

The School Counselor's Role

The primary role of the school counselor in the 504 planning process is to be an essential member of the 504 interdisciplinary team. All members of the 504 interdisciplinary team need to be adequately trained in Section 504 law and processes (Milsom

& DeWeese, 2021; US DoE, 2023). The school counselor is uniquely positioned to advocate for students and families, collaborate with faculty and staff, and work toward creating equitable systems and access to the 504 process. Specifically, school counselors perform the following essential functions as a member of the 504 interdisciplinary team:

- Assist students and families with gaining access to the 504 process and procedural rights (Lewis & Muniz, 2023)
- Help students and families understand the translation of services from assessments to school settings (Milsom & DeWeese, 2021)
- Collaborate and consult with students; parents/guardians; teachers; administration; school psychologists; and other physical, mental and behavioral health care providers to reach a consensus around appropriate and reasonable accommodations, if any (Lewis & Muniz, 2023; Milsom & DeWeese, 2021)
- Support students who receive accommodations with all life transitions, including postsecondary transitions, and teach self-advocacy skills as developmentally appropriate to ensure access to Section 504 supports (Lombari, et al., 2022; Milsom & DeWeese, 2021)
- Advocate that school counselors are not written into the 504 plan as accommodation providers or facilitators, especially providing long-term therapy since this is outside the scope of practice for a school counselor (ASCA, 2022)
- Engage in training on 504 law and process for school counselors alongside school staff, faculty and administration (Goodman-Scott & Boulden, 2020)
- Use culturally sensitive planning processes and consider how social determinants of mental health are affecting students and their disability when determining needs and accommodations for the 504 plan (Johnson, et al., 2023; Lewis & Muniz, 2023)
- Disaggregate disciplinary actions and advanced coursework enrollment statistics to ensure students with 504 plans are not overrepresented in disciplinary actions and have equitable access and enrollment in advanced course work (U.S. Department of Education, 2024)
- Use extreme care and communication if tasked with taking on an eligibility determination role within the 504 process that could negatively affect the counseling relationship (Goodman-Scott & Boulden, 2020)
- Advocate for the inclusion of the school counselor's role in the 504 process within school counselor preparation programs (Goodman-Scott & Boulden, 2020)

If school counselors are tasked with 504 coordination/case management in their school or district, they should actively advocate against that role. Until that role is removed, school counselors should ensure they are not the sole decision-makers in determining 504 evaluation and identification and whether any accommodations are provided to the student. Inappropriate Section 504 responsibilities/duties for the school counselor include but are not limited to:

- Making singular decisions regarding student placement or retention
- Serving in any supervisory capacity related to Section 504 implementation
- Serving as the school district representative for the team writing the Section 504
- Coordinating, writing or supervising a specific plan under Section 504 of Public Law 93-112 (i.e., no case management)
- Providing long-term therapy to students with disabilities (ASCA, 2022)
- Coordinating and/or facilitating 504 meetings
- Preparing and disseminating student records

Summary

School counselors support each and every student, including students with disabilities. School counselors serve a vital role on the Section 504 team as an advocate for students. School counselors should not be responsible for developing, implementing, monitoring, coordinating/managing 504 plans to avoid conflicts with their role for each and every student in the building, their role as an advocate for students and their work with staff and teachers. When school counselors serve as Section 504 coordinators/case managers, equitable access to a school counseling program and working relationships with students, families and school staff will be negatively affected.

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The School Counselor and Social/Emotional Development

(Adopted 2017; revised 2023)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors deliver school counseling programs that enhance student growth in three domain areas: academic, career, and social/emotional development. As a part of that program, school counselors implement strategies and activities to help each and every student enhance their social/emotional development – the mindsets and behaviors students need to manage emotions and learn and apply interpersonal skills - while recognizing that growth in all three domains is necessary for students to be successful now and later in life.

The Rationale

As social/emotional experts, school counselors design and implement school counseling programs using the direct student services of classroom instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling, as well as the indirect student services of referrals, consultation and collaboration with families, teachers and administrators to promote each and every student's social/emotional development. (ASCA, 2019). School counselors engaging in direct services yield "desirable outcomes in a variety of areas including students' social and emotional development, academic performance, and college or career pursuits" (Lemberger-Truelove et al., 2021, p. 1).

The social/emotional domain is composed of standards to help students manage emotions and learn and apply interpersonal skills as early as preschool and kindergarten (ASCA, 2021a). School counselors teach mindsets and behaviors for student success in all grade levels to enhance the learning process and create a culture of college and career readiness for each and every student. According to a meta-analysis by Durlak et al. (2022), students who had access to social emotional learning (SEL) programs were shown to have positive outcomes including, "improved personal and social skills, attitudes, positive social behavior, and academic performance, and reductions in problematic behavior, emotional distress, and drug use" (p. 23). In addition, Cipriano et al. (2023) found that students enrolled in schools with SEL programs are "more engaged, have better quality relationships with their teachers, and have demonstrated increased prosociality" (p.5).

The school counselor collaborates with the school-based leadership team and other school staff to identify students' social/emotional needs. The school counselor can then implement interventions designed to target social emotional needs including standalone classroom instruction, inclusive and affirming practices, integration of SEL with academic curricula, and whole school approaches (Durlak et al., 2022). An analysis by Lemberger-Truelove et al. (2021) found that school counseling interventions in the social emotional domain resulted in "greater positive changes in stress tolerance, social curiosity, executive functioning, and academic achievement" (p. 5). Overall, evidence has shown that well-implemented SEL programs can have a more positive impact on academic performance than those that are exclusively educational in nature (Durlak et al., 2022).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors play a critical role in supporting social/emotional development as they:

- Use evidence-based, inclusive, and trauma-informed curriculum and resources when delivering interventions to enhance social/emotional development.
- Collaborate with classroom teachers to provide school counseling lessons to each and every student through direct instruction, team-teaching or providing lesson plans for learning activities or units in classrooms aimed at social/emotional development (ASCA, 2019).
- Provide targeted multi-tiered approaches to support the needs of individuals and small groups of students (ASCA, 2021b; Durlak et al., 2022)
- Understand the nature and range of human characteristics specific to child and adolescent development.
- Identify and employ appropriate appraisal methods for individual and group interventions that support K–12 students' social/emotional development.
- Use counseling theories that are effective in a school setting to inform both direct and indirect student services supporting K–12 students' social/emotional development.

- Use assessment in the context of appropriate statistics and research methodology, follow-up assessment and measurement methods to implement appropriate program planning for social/emotional development.
- Collaborate with school staff to create an inclusive and affirming environment for each and every student
- Collaborate with community resources in supporting students and refer as appropriate when student needs exceed the scope of the school counselor role.

Summary

Interventions that promote social/emotional development improve social behavior and academic performance and reduce problematic behaviors and emotional distress. School counselors provide a school counseling program that helps each and every student enhance their social/emotional development and attain the mindsets and behaviors needed for success while recognizing that growth in the three domains of academic, career, and social/emotional development is necessary for students to be successful now and later in life.

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The School Counselor and Student Sexual Wellness

(Adopted 1988; revised 1993, 1999, 2001, 2006, 2012, 2018, 2024)

Note: This statement was previously titled The School Counselor and Prevention of Sexually Transmitted Infections.

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors promote the health and wellness of each and every student through the advocacy and support of comprehensive, developmentally appropriate educational efforts related to sexual wellness. Using culturally competent best practices, school counselors collaborate with key school and community partners (e.g., health and physical education instructors, school nurses, community healthcare specialists) in these efforts, while recognizing the importance of student/family confidentiality. Because of the connection between student sexual wellness and social/emotional well-being, school counselors provide student support, counseling and referral services regarding all aspects of sexual wellness, including consent, disease prevention, contraception, sexual and gender diversity and interpersonal violence.

The Rationale

Sexual wellness is a holistic and positive approach to sexuality and sexual health that embraces the idea that sexuality is a fundamental part of human life. To address sexual wellness comprehensively, the physical, emotional, psychological and social aspects related to human development must be considered. In schools, comprehensive sexual education furthers this approach by maintaining open and healthy communication about sexuality in society, including raising awareness about issues related to consent, disease prevention, contraception, sexual and gender diversity, and interpersonal violence (Lara, 2023). School counselors recognize the "connection between comprehensive sex education and social/emotional learning (SEL) with empathy, respect for others and emotional regulation as key outcomes" (Joe, et al., 2023, p. 2).

Sexual wellness is a complex topic due to factors including state laws, school and district policies and procedures, political ideologies and individual opinions. However, due to the interconnectedness of SEL and comprehensive sexual education, school counselors act within their scope of practice by collaborating with key personnel and supporting advocacy efforts, prevention and interventions related to student sexual wellness. The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2022) guide school counselors' work by focusing on adherence to laws and school/district policies and procedures, confidentiality limits and the importance of collaborating with students, school faculty/staff and parents/guardians when students need assistance.

The School Counselor's Role

As part of a school counseling program, school counselors advocate for developmentally appropriate educational efforts related to youth sexual wellness including:

- consent
- prevention of sexually transmitted infections
- contraception
- sexual and gender diversity
- interpersonal violence

School counselors collaborate with key education and community partners to provide advocacy, prevention and intervention support related to student sexual wellness while complying with local, state and federal laws, district policy and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2022). School counselors strive to maintain an up-to-date understanding of evidence-based best practices, recommendations and resources regarding sexual wellness. Additionally, to ethically promote healthy living and positive decision-making, school counselors have a responsibility to examine and address any implicit biases they may hold regarding sexual wellness (ASCA, 2022).

Advocating for Sexual Wellness As systemic change agents, school counselors possess the ability to examine and navigate many systems within a school (Milner & Upton, 2016). Through this role, school counselors collaborate with key school staff and community partners and serve as a voice for developing positive student sexual wellness policies. Advocacy efforts may include:

- Advocating for equitable school policies around student sexual wellness, especially when such district guidelines create barriers and marginalize students
- Aiding in the identification and addition of appropriate and culturally competent evidence-based sexual wellness curriculum
- Identifying supportive community resources and referrals for students and families (Milner & Upton, 2016)

Prevention of Unwanted Outcomes Related to Sexual Wellness School counselors provide preventive strategies to students through instruction, appraisal and advisement; counseling; and collaborating and consulting with families to promote student sexual wellness. School counselors may advocate for a particular focus on prevention with populations less likely to receive adequate sexual wellness education that may impede their development (ASCA, 2022).

Preventive education may include:

- Collaborating with school health personnel on prevention measures to reduce stigma and increase awareness of sexual wellness.
- Facilitating classroom lessons on healthy decision-making, self-esteem, positive interpersonal skills and peer relations, setting boundaries and respect for self and body.
- Family engagement and parent/guardian education of student sexual wellness and developmentally appropriate conversations with their children.

Interventions for Unwanted Outcomes Related to Sexual Wellness School counselors provide support to students who disclose sexual-wellness concerns and offer referrals to intervention services as needed. Referring students to appropriate programs and services, as well as collaborating with parents/guardians and community partners, can help shape or influence students' health and behaviors (Wilkins et al., 2022). Intervention support services may include:

- Providing short-term counseling to students to help them navigate the social/emotional impact of topics such as teen pregnancy, teen dating violence and sexually transmitted infections
- Serving as a liaison between the school and community health care partners to link students and families to further resources
- Collaborating with school and community health professionals on any potential accommodations a student may need to be academically successful

Summary

School counselors have a primary role in advocating for and enhancing students' social/emotional well-being, which includes their sexual well-being. School counselors collaborate with key school staff and community partners to support awareness in educational efforts related to sexual wellness while providing resources, prevention and intervention support to students and families following federal, state and local laws, evidence-based best practices and current recommendations.

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Center for Disease Control and Prevention: Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/about/hivstd_prevention.htm

Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA): http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/reg/ferpa/index.html Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN): https://www.glsen.org/article/call-action-youth-parents-community-members-educators-and-policymakers

Guttmacher Institute State Laws and Policies: https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/laws-policies

Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule: http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/administrative/privacyrule/index.html

National Coalition of STD Directors Promoting Sex Healthy through STD Prevention Adolescent Sexual Health: http://www.ncsddc.org/resources/

Sexually Transmitted Diseases – Prevention https://www.cdc.gov/std/prevention/default.htm

The School Counselor and Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention

(Adopted 2018, Revised 2024)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors work to protect the health and well-being of each and every student by proactively enhancing awareness of mental health and ensuring policies and procedures are in place to intervene and respond to youth suicidal behavior. School counselors exercise reasonable care when a student poses serious and foreseeable harm to self or others and informs parents/guardians, school administration and/or emergency services if necessary.

The Rationale

Suicide is the third-leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 15 and 35 and the second-leading cause of death for youth ages 10 to 14. Between 2000–2021, suicide rates for this age group increased 52.2% (CDC, 2023). Deaths are only a portion of the burden of suicidal behavior; suicide attempts and suicidal thoughts among youths exceed deaths among this group. In 2020, approximately 105,000 youths aged 14–18 years visited emergency rooms for self-harm injuries (Gaylor et. al, 2023).

The prevalence of suicidal behavior has varying impacts on subgroups. LGBTQ+ youth are at increased risk for suicidal thoughts and are statistically more likely to attempt suicide than their peers due to environmental and societal risk factors. Data from 2019–2021 reveals that female students' rate of suicidal behavior has increased as well (Gaylor et. al, 2023).

Research indicates that universal school-based suicide prevention efforts can prevent the development of suicidal thoughts and behaviors in adolescents and that youth suicide risk identification and prevention in schools is likely to help high-risk youth obtain needed treatment that they otherwise would not have received (Ayer & Colpe, 2023). School counselors' implementation of suicide prevention, intervention and postvention efforts are critical in reducing the threat of youth suicide and supporting student well-being.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors have a legal and ethical responsibility to provide a holistic approach to student's social/emotional well-being and comprehensive suicide prevention policies including prevention, intervention and postvention components.

Prevention Components School counselors:

- Advocate for comprehensive district policies around suicide prevention
- Educate staff to recognize risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, response procedures, referrals, postvention and resources regarding youth suicide prevention
- Provide developmentally appropriate student instruction on the importance of safe and healthy choices and coping strategies focused on resiliency building and how to recognize risk factors and warning signs of mental health conditions and suicide in oneself and others (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention et al., 2019)
- Use data from universal screeners to proactively identify and address students' academic, career and social/emotional needs while ensuring appropriate supports are in place to respond to students' immediate needs (ASCA, 2023)
- Participate in district and school crisis team planning and practices

Intervention Components School counselors inform parents/guardians and school administration when a student poses a serious and foreseeable risk of harm to self or others. This notification is to be done after careful deliberation and consultation with appropriate professionals and/or an interdisciplinary crisis team. If school counselors are required to use assessments, screenings or any type of instrument to determine the suicide risk, they advocate for the use of an evidence-based tool and do not negate the risk of students' potential harm to self even if the assessment reveals a low risk. In addition, school counselors understand that risk assessments are just one component of the assessment process and, therefore, should be used with caution and for the purpose of information-gathering (ASCA, 2022). Parents/guardians are always contacted and notified of anything learned through an investigation of potential suicide, or with any instrument, that will guide parents/guardians

in efforts to protect their child (Stone, 2022). School counselors provide culturally responsive mental health resources to parents/guardians and recommendations for next steps based on perceived student need. School counselors follow state legislation and district policy when responding to suicide risk.

School counselors collaborate with the student to develop a safety plan and explore coping strategies (Stone, 2022). School counselors avoid no-harm contracts because they can provide a false sense of safety, and there is insufficient evidence about their effectiveness. Instead, school counselors discuss with parents/guardians safety proofing of home and all environments that student frequents to secure and remove all access to firearms and other lethal means of suicide.

School counselors engage appropriate emergency response personnel. When a student is actively suicidal and the immediate safety of the student or others is at- risk, school staff should immediately contact appropriate emergency response personnel per federal, state and local laws as well as school district policy (e.g., administrators, 911 dispatcher, child protective services, law enforcement). If parent/guardian abuse or neglect is the expressed reason for the student's suicidal ideation, it is best practice for the school counselor to contact child protective services rather than the parents/guardians in an effort to protect the student and ensure the student's safety and well-being (ASCA, 2020).

Postvention Components - Following a suicidal crisis and/or a psychiatric hospitalization, school counselors meet with the student's parents/guardians, other relevant staff and, if appropriate, include the student to discuss re-entry and address next steps needed to ensure the student's readiness for return to school and plan for the first day back. Recommended actions include:

- Coordinate with any outside health care providers
- Discuss and document any necessary accommodations (i.e. exempted work, adjusted deadlines, building safety plan)
- Identify school support person to periodically check-in with the student for ongoing support
- Notify teachers and other relevant staff that the student is returning after a medically related absence and may need adjusted educational supports

Following a suicide loss, school counselors take the following steps to assist with the grief process, reduce the risk of contagion and provide needed support:

- Mobilize a crisis response team
- Contact the family of the deceased student
- Notify staff, students, parents/guardians
- Monitor student and community reactions (e.g., social media)
- Provide additional support resources if needed

Summary

Through the implementation of comprehensive suicide prevention policies including prevention, intervention and postvention components, school counselors prioritize the health and well-being of each and every student.

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The School Counselor and Suicide Risk Assessment

(Adopted 2020, Revised 2025)

ASCA Position

When a student is identified as at risk for suicide, school counselors have both an ethical and legal responsibility to take appropriate action. School counselors understand that suicide risk is difficult to quantify, and the use of suicide risk assessments is only one part of the evaluation process. Thus, risk assessments should be used to gather information to assist parents/guardians in taking action rather than determining a student's level of risk.

The Rationale

Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for young people ages 10 to 24. Between 2000–2021, suicide rates for this age group increased 52.2% (Garnett & Curtis, 2023). Deaths are only a portion of the burden of suicidal behavior; suicide attempts and suicidal thoughts among youths exceed deaths among this group. In 2021, 9% of students in high school reported attempting suicide over the previous 12-month period (Jones, et. al., 2022). School counselors are in an optimal position to support students who are at risk for suicide. However, human behavior is often spontaneous and unpredictable, and research shows that risk assessments are not always reliable when determining one's level of risk. Additionally, the nature of the school environment makes it extremely difficult to conduct extensive assessments and students' responses may yield inaccurate information (ASCA, 2023).

The ASCA Information Gathering Tool is a valuable resource designed to help school counselors systematically collect essential information when assessing suicide ideation, ensuring informed and effective support for students in crisis. School counselors recognize that these conversations are not clinical interviews and always consult with knowledgeable colleagues when determining appropriate next steps. As part of a comprehensive approach to student safety, school counselors understand the importance of directly asking students about suicidal thoughts, access to means and safety planning. Collaboration with the student's support network, including caregivers and school-based mental health professionals, is essential in developing a plan prioritizing student safety and well-being. (ASCA, 2023).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors recognize that the level of suicide risk is difficult to quantify (ASCA, 2022; Stone, 2022). If school counselors are required to use assessments, screenings, or any type of instrument to determine suicide risk, they should advocate that they are never required to negate any level of risk of harm (Stone, 2022). In addition, school counselors should communicate concerns accurately and ensure appropriate action is taken.

School counselors support the development of district policy based on best practices in suicide prevention (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, American School Counselor Association, National Association of School Psychologists, & The Trevor Project, 2019). When district protocols are in place, school counselors must follow them while advocating for change when the protocols do not comply with ethical standards. When the school district does not have a written suicide-risk protocol for school personnel, school counselors advocate for the team-based creation of suicide-risk policies and procedures that support students' mental health needs and align with team members' competencies. It is also imperative that suicide risk assessments are culturally sensitive to meet the needs of a diverse student population (Gallo & Wachter Morris, 2022).

If state legislation or school board policy requires a schoolwide screening program, school counselors advocate for the ethical use of valid and reliable instruments with concerns for cultural sensitivity and bias (ASCA, 2022). School counselors maintain that notifying parents/guardians of a student's suicidal ideation is non-negotiable, even if the student is 18 years of age or older. The exception is when the parent/guardian's abuse or neglect is the expressed reason for the student's suicidal ideation. In these cases, the school counselor must contact child protective services.

When a student is suicidal and in crisis in school, the school counselor's primary role is to keep the student safe until the student can be transferred to the parents/guardians. Before releasing the student to the parents/guardians, school counselors:

- Ensure the conversation is in the parents/guardians' primary language if possible, and do not use the student as a translator (ASCA Information-Gathering Tool, 2023)
- Provide clear information to the parents/guardians about what is known regarding the student's suicidal ideation
- Do not negate the risk of harm based on a student's self-report
- Avoid using words or phrases such as "this is the cause of impulse control" or "low risk" in an effort to soften the message to the parents/guardians
- Reflect on the cultural background of students and their parents/guardians
- Strongly encourage parents/guardians to seek a medical or mental health provider for a comprehensive assessment of their child
- Help the family find resources if needed or requested; mobile crisis outreach programs can be an easily accessible resource. School counselors should be able to provide a list of outside agencies and resources in their community to students and parents/guardians (A.6.b.)
- Clearly inform parents/guardians about the limitations of the school counselor's role in regard to clinical assessments. (Stone, 2022)
- Create a plan to follow up with the student and family

As parents/guardians are the people most invested long-term in a child's life, they must be able to exercise custody and control over their child's well-being. However, in the event the parents/guardians are neglecting the child's mental health needs, school counselors make a report to the proper authorities. It is helpful for school counselors to document these interactions with the parents/guardians and the student to ensure all parties understand the plan that has been established (Stone, 2022).

Summary

School counselors have an ethical and legal obligation to prioritize student safety, particularly in suicide prevention. They play a critical role in identifying students who may be at risk, notifying parents/guardians and collaborating with school staff and mental health professionals to ensure appropriate intervention. While suicide risk assessments serve as information-gathering tools, they are not predictive instruments, and school counselors advocate for ethical practices in their use. School counselors recognize the level of suicide risk (e.g., low, medium, high) is difficult to accurately quantify. If required to use a risk assessment, it must be completed with the understanding that it is an information-gathering tool and just one part of the risk assessment process.

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The School Counselor and Use of Administrative Support Staff in School Counseling Programs

(Adopted 1974; reviewed and reaffirmed 1980; revised 1986, 1993, 1999, 2001, 2008, 2013, 2019, 2025)

ASCA Position

School counselors understand the value added to a school counseling program through the effective use of administrative support staff. Partnerships with these staff members allow school counselors to use their time and professional expertise more effectively to meet student needs and ensure each and every student receive access to a comprehensive school counseling program.

The Rationale

To achieve maximum effectiveness in a school counseling program, the ASCA National Model® recommends a student-to-school counselor ratio of 250:1 and that 80% or more of a school counselor's time be spent providing direct and indirect services to students (ASCA, 2025). Recent studies have demonstrated significant correlations between student achievement and student-to-school-counselor ratios (e.g., Gewertz, 2018). However, the national average ratio is 376:1 for the 2023–2024 school year (U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2024).

Research consistently shows that larger caseloads make it difficult for school counselors to fulfill their responsibilities (Hilts, 2023). The ASCA National Model® offers a framework for school counseling programs where school counselors are actively involved in providing direct services to students and in team efforts for indirect services such as consultation and collaboration (ASCA, 2025). High student-to-school-counselor ratios create considerable challenges for school counselors, limiting their ability to effectively develop and implement a school counseling program that promotes the best possible outcomes for each and every student.

School counselors need additional support to build strong partnerships and implement comprehensive school counseling programs effectively (Mason, 2023). When the school counselor works effectively with administrative support staff, the school counselor's efficacy is enhanced (Atici, 2014).

The Role of Administrative Support Staff in School Counseling Programs

Administrative support staff may include but are not limited to administrative assistants, secretaries, receptionists, registrars and other similar professional positions. These staff provide opportunity for school counselor to concentrate on delivering the school counseling program by assisting in a variety of areas, such as:

- welcoming and managing the flow of students and families to the school counseling office
- answering general questions that do not require a school counselor's expertise
- handling phone calls
- responding to general school-counseling-program-related email
- maintaining student records
- organizing files
- data entry
- new student registration

Their assistance helps school counselors have more time to implement best practices, including the design, delivery and assessment of a comprehensive school counseling program; well-defined school counseling roles and responsibilities; clear communication; established boundaries; and ethical decision-making to promote student success.

School counseling administrative support staff positions require sensitivity to students' concerns, knowledge of the school counseling program and understanding of the school counselor's role. These positions also require maintaining the highest level of confidentiality of student records and personal information. Clerical support staff defer to the school counselor for all services and interventions that are outside the support staff role and more appropriately handled by the school counselor.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors are encouraged to collaborate with administrative support staff to outline processes and activities that best support the school counseling program. School counselors create channels for clear communication, foster a positive work environment and show respect and appreciation to support staff.

School counselors may assist in selecting initial and ongoing professional development for school counseling administrative support staff to ensure they understand the procedures and responsibilities of the office (Atici, 2014). This professional development may include topics such as:

- human relations
- cultural competence and humility
- community resources
- the importance of maintaining confidentiality regarding student issues and student records

Supervision of support staff is the responsibility of administrators. School counselors consult with administrators related to the responsibilities of the position and individual performance.

Summary

School counselors understand the value administrative support staff add to a school counseling program. Incorporating administrative support staff within the school counseling program allows school counselors to concentrate on specialized tasks that align with their expertise and training. School counselors work with administrative support staff to outline processes and activities that fit within their professional role and best support the school counseling program.

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The School Counselor and Test Preparation Programs

(Adopted 1989; revised 1993, 1999, 2001, 2006, 2012, 2018)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors understand the impact of testing and test scores on college admissions, industry credentialing and other areas pertaining to students' postsecondary plans and goals. School counselors assist students in preparing for standardized tests by promoting opportunities designed to increase knowledge and improve test-taking skills. School counselors help students and their families become knowledgeable about test preparation programs and assist them as they decide which programs best meet their needs.

The Rationale

Students are often apprehensive about standardized tests and sometimes view tests as intimidating or threatening. Compounding these feelings is the fact that, since 1990, average increases in first-time college applications has increased yearly, while the number of students being accepted to college has remained relatively stable (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2015). Research has demonstrated that markers predicting college success occur across a student's development and include reading proficiency by third grade, sound school attendance, positive social skills, rigorous course-taking pathways and maintenance of a 3.0 GPA or higher (College and Career Readiness & Success Center, 2013).

Although many postsecondary institutions require applicants to take a college entrance test to be considered for admission and/or placement, not all schools do. School counselors recognize that test-taking strategies for standardized tests are test-specific and will not necessarily be applicable to all standardized tests or other assessments students would take during their academic career. Even so, school counselors are often asked for advice on test preparation programs to increase scores and opportunities.

Research on test-taking and test-wise strategies, such as time-use and guessing strategies, revealed that such preparation can improve scores. These gains are even larger when a student participates in a longer test preparation program that allows the student to practice and develop broader cognitive skills (Plakans & Gebril, 2015). Many students benefit from becoming familiar with the test format and test-taking strategies before taking a standardized test. Content area review and repeated test-based practice have shown to be beneficial for students as they prepare for exams (Turner, 2009).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors provide test-taking strategies as a part of a school counseling program promoting academic, career and social/emotional development of each and every student. Test-taking skills and strategies include:

- Time use
- Error avoidance and guessing
- Memory and recall techniques
- Deductive reasoning
- Test-wiseness (including scoring rubrics, test format and item formats)
- Stress management and anxiety reduction (Selend, 2012)

School counselors collaborate with teachers and other school staff to coordinate and provide information on integrating test-taking strategies, content and practice tests into regular classroom instruction. Examples include providing students and families with research and information on a variety of test preparation options to enable them to make informed decisions about commercial test preparation programs, free programs, tutoring and other options. The school counselor collaborates with staff to encourage integration of test-taking strategies and content across the curriculum.

Summary

Research shows test preparation can help students improve test scores (What Works Clearinghouse, 2016). School counselors collaborate with school staff to assist students as they prepare for tests by providing instruction on test-taking skills and research and information about test preparation programs to students and their families.

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The School Counselor and Threat Assessment

(Proposed, 2025)

ASCA Position

School counselors are essential members of the multidisciplinary threat assessment team, contributing expertise on student development and supporting intervention strategies. School counselors' participation on the team brings focus to prevention efforts that promote students' well-being and responsive efforts to develop support plans for students in need of intervention. It is not appropriate for school counselors to lead threat investigations.

The Rationale

Incidents that threaten student and staff safety include bullying, harassment, violence, weapons or gang behavior (Ercek & Birel, 2021). As school violence concerns grow, the number of students who present as a potential threat to others has increased. This increase makes defining the role and scope of the school counselor's involvement in threat assessments necessary.

A threat assessment aims to interrupt people on a pathway to commit "predatory or instrumental violence, the type of behavior associated with targeted attacks" (Hoffman & Meloy, 2021). Hence, a threat assessment team's main function is to ensure safety and to develop a support plan for students in need of intervention. School counselors play a collaborative role in threat assessment, contributing their expertise to inform interventions and support plans to gather information.

To protect the student-to-school-counselor relationship, it is not appropriate for school counselors to conduct assessments or make final decisions. Students need trusted adults they can turn to when sharing concerns about potential threats, and school counselors are well-positioned to serve in this role. For students to feel comfortable speaking up, they must have a reporting process that ensures their safety, makes them feel valued and provides appropriate protection. When trusted adults build relationships with students and create supportive school environments, students are encouraged to share critical information while feeling secure in doing so (Ellington, et al., 2023).

Although confidentiality is a foundational component of the student-to-school-counselor relationship, it is important for students to understand that this confidentiality has limits, particularly when there is a risk of harm to self or others. School counselors have an ethical and legal duty to warn when credible threats are disclosed. By clearly communicating these boundaries in advance and consistently applying them, school counselors can maintain trust while fulfilling their obligation to protect the well-being of each and every student (ASCA, 2022).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors have an ethical obligation to promote safe school environments (ASCA, 2022). Thus, as members of a multidisciplinary team, school counselors are in an optimal position to build positive relationships with students, foster connectedness within schools, and identify and support students who are a risk to themselves or others (Ellington et al., 2023). In relation to threat assessments, school counselors:

- Participate in multidisciplinary threat assessment teams to provide input on student behavior, development and needs
- Advocate for a threat assessment team if one is not currently in place
- Gather information about concerns for suicide along with threat assessment to acquire a comprehensive understanding of students' needs (Ellington, et al., 2023)
- Facilitate periodic check-ins to provide additional support with students who are potentially at risk (Ellington, et al., 2023)
- Advocate for interventions that support students' social/emotional well-being, mental health, academic and career development.
- Focus on students' emotional needs rather than on punishment or discipline
- Recognize mental health warning signs
- Provide short-term counseling to support students involved in or affected by potential threats, helping them process emotions, manage stress and access further support when needed
- Educate the school community on preventive measures, such as fostering a safe school climate and recognizing early

warning signs of distress
- Avoid responsibilities conflicting with the school counselor's ethical role, such as interrogating students, conducting threat investigations or determining punitive outcomes
- Fulfill the ethical responsibility to always act in students' best interest, to promote their academic success, career development and social/emotional well-being.

Summary

School counselors understand the positive effects of providing a safe and caring school environment and play a vital role in creating a supportive atmosphere. As a member of a multidisciplinary team, school counselors collaborate with administrators and others to provide support with threat assessments.

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AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

The School Counselor and Trauma-Informed Practice

(Adopted 2016; Revised 2022)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors understand the impact adverse childhood experiences have on students' academic achievement and social/emotional development. Through the implementation of a school counseling program, school counselors strive to identify, support and promote the success of students who have experienced trauma.

The Rationale

Schools are increasingly recognizing the lasting negative impact on children exposed to traumatic events (Davis, et al., 2022). Children's trauma exposure, either as direct victims or as witnesses, can lead to social/emotional harm that manifests in negative ways in schools, including low academic performance, maladaptive behavior, lack of attention and focus, and an increase in absenteeism and drop-out rates (Rumsey & Milsom, 2019).

A trauma-sensitive school is one in which each and every student feels safe, welcomed and supported (Cole et al., 2013). Establishing a trauma-informed school counseling program paired with a multitiered system of supports (MTSS) and a preventive focus can decrease the effects of trauma exposure (Davis, et al., 2022; Martinez et al., 2020; and Rumsey & Milsom, 2019). The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014) describes four characteristics of a trauma-informed program or system:

- realizes the impact of trauma and understands the potential for recovery
- recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in system members
- responds by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures and practices
- actively resists re-traumatization

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors can be key players in promoting a trauma-sensitive environment in their schools, as they are in a unique position to identify students affected by traumatic events and provide the support and resources these students need. School counselors implementing a school counseling program addressing academic, career and social/emotional development can have a positive impact at all levels of education.

To promote students' physical, emotional and mental health and to create conditions allowing students to thrive and succeed, school counselors:

- recognize the signs of trauma in students
- understand traumas need not predict individual failure if sufficient focus on resilience and strengths is present
- increase and maintain knowledge of current best practices to avoid re-traumatizing students
- create connected communities and positive school climates that are trauma-sensitive to keep students healthy, in school and involved in positive social networks
- support the implementation of effective academic and behavioral practices, such as positive behavioral interventions and supports, restorative approaches to discipline and social/emotional learning
- promote safe, stable and nurturing relationships.
- provide community resource information to students and families dealing with trauma
- educate staff on the effects of trauma and how to refer students to the school counselor
- collaborate with community resources to provide support for students
- promote a trauma-sensitive framework for policies, procedures and behaviors to entire staff
- recognize the role technology can play in magnifying trauma incidents for students

Summary

A trauma-sensitive school is one in which each and every student feels safe, welcomed and supported. School counselors, collaborating with school staff and community partners, can help transform the school into a safe, supportive, trauma-sensitive learning environment. School counselors advocate for policies and procedures focused on the trauma-sensitive framework and the establishment of a safe school climate each and every student.

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The School Counselor and Universal Screening

(Adopted 2023)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Universal screening provides invaluable data to multidisciplinary teams, including school counselors, as they identify student needs and match them to interventions within a multitiered, multidisciplinary system of supports (MTSS). Universal screening must be carried out in an ethical manner that complies with federal and state laws and school district policies.

The Rationale

Universal screening in schools is defined as a preventive, systematic method for gathering data about the academic, social/emotional, and behavioral well-being and the mental health indicators of a given population (Donohue et al., 2018). As part of a multidisciplinary team, school counselors use data from universal screeners as a tool to proactively identify and address students' academic, career, and social/emotional needs within an MTSS framework (ASCA, 2021; Goodman-Scott, et al., 2023).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors collaborate with other school leaders to develop and implement an MTSS framework that helps identify and meet students' academic, career, social/emotional and mental health needs. An integral element of MTSS is examining system wide results of universal screeners to improve the school counseling program, tiered interventions and supports for each and every student. In addition, school counselors leverage their shared leadership, knowledge, skills, and awareness to respond to students' individual needs identified through universal screeners (Donohue et al., 2018).

School counselors follow ethical standards, federal and state laws, and district policies regarding the use of universal screeners. The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) requires schools to obtain active consent from parents/guardians when requiring student surveys about eight protected areas, including mental or psychological problems of students or their families, sex behaviors or attitudes, and income (ASCA, 2022; USED, 2022). Questions about these types of information are often included in universal screeners.

Surveys administered by the school or district that are voluntary only require passive consent. "Passive consent" requires parents/guardians to be notified via U.S. mail or email about the survey and given the option of opting their student out of participation in the survey. Needs assessments and universal screeners that gather information by reviewing existing data or input from teachers and other educators do not require consent. According to the U.S. Department of Education, if a student is required to complete a survey and/or the survey is funded by the U.S. Department of Education or other federal agency, active consent is required. "Active consent" means that a parent/guardian must provide written, signed, and dated consent for the student to participate in the screening or survey process (USDE, 2020).

States may extend additional privacy protection beyond federal laws but cannot take away protection given to students and parents under federal law (Stone, 2022). School counselors must make themselves aware of their state statutes to ensure compliance.

School counselors ensure that a universal screener is valid, reliable, culturally sensitive, developmentally appropriate, and has been normed on a similar population (ASCA, 2022). School counselors ensure that any identified concerns are responded to in a timely manner with appropriate support services and community agencies. When necessary, school counselors collaborate with school staff and families to assist students in crisis. During and after the screening process, school counselors work with their multidisciplinary teams to:

- Communicate any identified concerns, results and appropriate resources to parents/guardians in a timely, culturally sensitivity manner.
- Use and allocate appropriate resources to support identified students and improve tiered instruction and supports
- Analyze results to implement classroom lessons about student mental, social/emotional and physical well-being and advocate for changes within the school to promote equitable access to needed resources and the mindsets and behaviors students need to be successful

- Use multiple data points, both quantitative and qualitative whenever possible, to provide students and families with complete and accurate information to promote students' well-being
- Store results in a confidential, secure manner and purge results appropriately (White and Kelly, 2010; ASCA, 2022)

Summary

School counselors recognize the benefits and legal/ethical considerations of universal screeners. Through implementation of universal screeners, school counselors gather data in a systematic, proactive manner that can be used to identify students who may benefit from academic and/or social/emotional supports and advocate for systemic practices that help each and every student succeed.

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The School Counselor and Working with Students Who Are Undocumented

(Adopted 2017; revised 2019, 2025)

ASCA Position

School counselors promote each and every student's academic, career and social/emotional development regardless of immigration status. They advocate for students' right to access free and appropriate public education and advocate with and on behalf of students to ensure safety. School counselors actively work to address conditions that do not reflect the school counseling professional ethics. They maintain culturally sustaining practices to help create a safe and inclusive school environment to promote success for each and every student.

The Rationale

The 1982 Plyler v. Doe Supreme Court ruling (U.S. Supreme Court, 1982) constitutionally protects access to pre-K–12 public education for students who are undocumented. However, after high school, students who are undocumented confront the challenge of ineligibility for federal financial assistance and disparate state-level tuition policies. Therein, school counselors serve as frontline advocates for students who are undocumented, assist in navigating formidable obstacles and support access to postsecondary education (Diaz-Strong, 2025). In 2025, 23 states extended in-state tuition rates to qualifying students who are undocumented, while eight states provide need-based financial assistance to such individuals (Immigrants Rising, 2025). Given that school counselors address academic, career and social/emotional development, they have an ethical responsibility to stay informed of legislation and options that facilitate student access to postsecondary education and career opportunities.

In addition to restricted access to financial aid for higher education, recent research underscores the unique stressors students who are undocumented face, including fear of deportation, family separation and concerns about their future (Muñoz et al., 2023; Salazar et al., 2024; U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2015). Such challenges can significantly impede academic, career and social/emotional development, resulting in issues of depression, anxiety, fear, structural racism, absenteeism and acculturation (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Ee & Gándara, 2020; Torres-Olave et al., 2021). Consequently, school counselors are ethically obligated to offer services that meet the unique needs of students who are undocumented which may include research-based practices such as culturally sustaining practices, strengths-based approaches and school-based strategies within a multitiered system of supports (Edirmanasinghe et al., 2022; Goodman-Scott et al., 2022; Ponterotto et al., 2008). These practices are vital tools for systemic change.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors focus their skills, time and energy on delivering direct and indirect services that have a positive impact on each and every student, including students experiencing issues surrounding undocumented status regardless of national origin, race, color, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status or other demographic factors (ASCA, 2025). As integral members of the educational team, school counselors use leadership, advocacy and collaboration to promote equitable opportunities and systemic change that foster an inclusive school climate.

Recognizing that some students face unique legal, social and psychological challenges, school counselors continually refine their knowledge of the legal landscape as well as evidence-based practices addressing family separation, detention, deportation and other immigration-related issues. Through their comprehensive school counseling programs, school counselors ensure each and every student receives the academic, career and social/emotional supports necessary to thrive in school and beyond.

To promote success for each and every student regardless of immigration status, school counselors:

- Support students who are undocumented by helping them obtain an education that meets their needs and prepares them for postsecondary opportunities, including informing students and families about educational opportunities and rights (e.g., referrals for multilingual language services, special education services and medical treatment).
- Assist students with seeking postsecondary goals, navigating college access and finding funding for their goals, keeping abreast of current policies and practices of postsecondary institutions regarding access for students who are undocumented.

- Provide social/emotional support for students affected by immigration stressors, including support if the student has been discriminated against or experiences bullying or harassment.
- Advocate for the rights of each and every student, including students who are undocumented, by ensuring students are not barred from education based on international birth certificates, lack of a Social Security number or a home language other than English.
- Advocate for schools to be a safe haven for students who are undocumented and follow federal, state and local laws; district policy; and ethical practice related to divulging ~~confidential~~ information to ~~any~~ individuals and outside agencies ~~without proper legal documentation.~~
- Advocate against the practice of separating children from their families at U.S. borders (ASCA, 2018).
- Partner with available community resources to support referrals in assisting families with challenges surrounding their immigration status, including recovery associated with keeping families intact when possible and trauma resulting from separation.
- Collaborate with school and district personnel and education partners to eliminate discriminatory language and actions toward students who are undocumented and their families.
- Inform school and district personnel, students, families and the community about policies, procedures and rights of students who are undocumented and their families.

Summary

School counselors understand that students who are undocumented need support for legal, financial and social stressors as well as assistance with postsecondary goals. School counselors have a responsibility to provide services to each and every student regardless of their immigration status, to advocate for their access to services and to prevent discrimination against students by removing barriers impeding student development and achievement.

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ASCA Resources

https://www.schoolcounselor.org/Publications-Research/Publications/Free-ASCA-Resources/Support-Immigrant-Students

The School Counselor and Virtual/Distance School Counseling

(Adopted 2017; revised 2023)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors working in a virtual setting provide a school counseling program with the same standards and adherence to ethics as school counselors in an in-person setting. In virtual environments, school counselors work collaboratively with school, family and community partners to ensure success for each and every student and access to opportunities that positively affect students' academic, career and social/emotional development.

The Rationale

Online learning is becoming increasingly relied upon in the United States as students ranging from kindergarten to the postsecondary level are enrolling in virtual schools and online distance-education programs via internet or web-based methods (Holmes & Kozlowski, 2016). The U.S. Department of Education defines virtual school as a "school that offers only [virtual] instruction in which students and teachers are separated by time and/or location, and interaction occurs via computers and/or telecommunications technologies. A virtual school generally does not have a physical facility that allows students to attend classes on site" (Keaton, 2021, para. 3).

Students can be involved in online programs, ranging from a part-time, hybrid model in which some components of their education are offered in an in-person environment and some in a fully digital environment, to fully online programs and degrees (Holmes & Kozlowski, 2016).

Students from diverse backgrounds enroll in virtual schools for various reasons. These reasons include:

- Dealing with mental health needs that require a smaller environment
- Being medically unable to attend a physical school
- Preferring a smaller class size or independent learning environment
- Experiencing bullying or other traumatic experiences in a traditional school setting
- Seeking a more rigorous school curriculum (i.e., gifted or accelerated courses)
- Needing more individualized instructional support
- Developing asynchronously, such as being accelerated in some courses and below grade level in others
- Participating in athletics or performing arts at the professional level

It is important to note that even when school counselors work within in-person settings, they may still need to implement virtual/distance/hybrid strategies and programs to deliver their school counseling program (Greenidge et al., 2023). For example, virtual/distance/hybrid activities are beneficial to connect with students and families during remote learning days or meet with students and families who are unable to access school counseling activities in person.

Due to the prevalence of online learning and the need to incorporate virtual/distance/hybrid activities into school counseling programs, it is necessary for school counselors to understand best practices for engaging in this work.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors working with students in a virtual/distance/hybrid school counseling setting:

- Adhere to the same ethical guidelines as school counselors in an in-person setting
- Educate students about appropriate conduct in the online setting
- Facilitate classroom instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling sessions that foster academic, career and social/emotional development
- Recognize, acknowledge and problem-solve the challenges and limitations of virtual/distance/hybrid school counseling
- Implement procedures for students to follow in both emergency and non-emergency situations when the school counselor is not available
- Recognize and mitigate the limitation of confidentiality within virtual/distance/hybrid school counseling, which may include unintended viewers or recipients

- Inform both the student and families of the benefits and limitations of virtual/distance/hybrid school counseling
- Educate students on how to participate in the virtual school counseling relationship to minimize and prevent potential misunderstandings that could occur due to lack of verbal cues and inability to read body language or other visual cues that provide contextual meaning to the process and relationship
- Recognize the challenges in virtual/distance/hybrid settings of assisting students considering suicide, including but identifying their physical location, keeping them engaged on the call or device, contacting their parents/guardians and getting help to their location

Summary

School counselors understand the expectations, benefits, and challenges of providing virtual/distance/hybrid school counseling services to students. This form of program delivery increases students' access to activities and enables school counselors to assist them with a variety of diverse and unique needs outside of the in-person environment.

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