

1 **The School Counselor and Corporal Punishment**

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

4 **American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position**

5 School counselors oppose the use of corporal punishment and advocate for trauma-sensitive
6 discipline policies and procedures.

8 **The Rationale**

9 Even though corporal punishment has been on a steady decline since the 1970s and has notable
10 negative effects, it is still legal and used in several of the United States (Gershoff & Font, 2016).
11 School counselors recognize the use of corporal punishment is likely to teach children that
12 violence is an acceptable way to resolve differences. Research shows physical punishment to be
13 ineffective in teaching new behaviors, and it is detrimental in teaching problem-solving skills.
14 Corporal punishment is not considered a trauma-sensitive approach to discipline in schools (Afifi
15 et al., 2017) and can have negative effects for students, including:

- 16 • Increased antisocial behavior such as lying, stealing, cheating, bullying, assaulting a
17 sibling or peers and lack of remorse for wrongdoing
- 18 • Increased risk of child abuse
- 19 • Erosion of trust between an adult and child
- 20 • Adverse effects on cognitive development
- 21 • Increased likelihood of suffering from depression and other negative social and mental
22 health outcomes

24 **The School Counselor's Role**

25 School counselors have a responsibility to protect students and to promote healthy student
26 development using multitiered systems of support that incorporate evidence-based practices and
27 strategies in administering discipline and teaching new behaviors that promote positive
28 social/emotional development (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013). The school
29 counselor serves as a resource to school personnel and families for the use of effective
30 intervention and discipline strategies. School counselors encourage public awareness of the
31 consequences of corporal punishment, provide strategies on alternatives to corporal punishment
32 and encourage legislation prohibiting the continued use of corporal punishment.

34 School counselors collaborate with families and school staff to build positive relationships
35 between students and adults with effective alternatives to corporal punishment including but not
36 limited to:

- 37 • using behavioral contracts
- 38 • setting realistic expectations
- 39 • enforcing rules consistently
- 40 • creating appropriate and logical consequences for inappropriate behavior
- 41 • conferencing with students and/or families with school personnel for planning and
42 reinforcing acceptable behavior
- 43 • emphasizing students' positive behaviors
- 44 • teaching pro-social, mediation and resolution skills as methods of problem solving
- 45 • providing information on parenting programs
- 46 • teaching emotional regulation

- 47 • encouraging mindfulness practices

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49 **Summary**

50 Research shows corporal punishment increases students' anti-social behavior, adversely affects
51 cognitive development and erodes the trust between children and adults. It is ineffective in
52 teaching new and positive behaviors and is detrimental in teaching appropriate problem-solving
53 methods. School counselors adamantly oppose the use of corporal punishment
54 and advocate for its elimination.

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56 **References**

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