

## **The School Counselor and Discipline**

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

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

The school counselor has specialized training and skills in promoting appropriate student behavior and preventing disruptive student behavior. The school counselor is not a disciplinarian but should be a resource for school personnel as they develop individual and schoolwide discipline procedures. The school counselor collaborates with school personnel and other stakeholders to establish policies encouraging appropriate behavior and maintaining safe schools 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. Research suggests that such behavior negatively affects classroom learning and school climate (Elliot, 2004; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001; Hernández, 2004; Lapan, Gysbers & Sun, 1997). To establish and maintain safe and respectful learning environments, school systems must seek effective discipline programs with the commitment and input of all school personnel, including school counselors. To most effectively promote student achievement and development, school counselors must maintain nonthreatening relationships with students and therefore are not involved in the administration of discipline. The school counselor should be, by policy, designated as a neutral and resourceful consultant, mediator and student advocate.

### **The School Counselor's Role**

The school counselor promotes positive student behaviors to create a safe, effective learning environment for all students. It is not the role of the school counselor to mete out punishment but instead to help create effective behavior change focused on positive, healthy behaviors. To do so, school counselors:

- Lead individual and small-group counseling that encourages students to make positive behavior choices and accept responsibility for their actions
- Consult with families, teachers, administrators and other school personnel to understand developmentally appropriate student behavior and promote positive student behavior
- Design and implement positive behavior and intervention support plans for individual students, in collaboration with classroom teachers and other school behavior specialists
- Collaborate with school stakeholders to develop, implement and maintain a developmentally appropriate schoolwide discipline program
- Serve as a mediator for student-student, student-teacher and student-family conflicts
- Coordinate and facilitate programs (mentor programs, peer support, conflict resolution and anger management programs) to assist students in developing pro-social behaviors
- Provide staff development on classroom management, student behavior and discipline.
- Keep informed of school, district and state policies related to student discipline
- Advocate for best practices for schoolwide discipline, including ensuring objective and equitable disciplinary practices

### **Summary**

The school counselor has specialized training and skills in promoting appropriate student behavior and preventing disruptive student behavior. The school counselor maintains nonthreatening relationships with students to best promote student achievement and development and serves as a resource for school personnel as they develop individual and schoolwide discipline procedures. The school counselor should be, by policy, designated as a neutral and resourceful consultant, mediator and student advocate. It is not the school counselor's role to serve as an enforcement agent but rather a significant contributor to the development of the prevention and intervention programs through which problem behaviors are managed and positive behaviors are nurtured.

## References

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- Hernández, T. J. (2004). A safe school climate: A systemic approach and the school counselor. *Professional School Counseling*, 7, 256-262.
- Lapan, R. T., Gysbers, N. C., & Sun, Y. (1997). The impact of more fully implemented guidance programs on the school experiences of high school students: A statewide evaluation study. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 75, 292-302.