

The School Counselor and Group Counseling

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

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Group counseling is vital in the delivery of the ASCA National Model to students as part of an effective comprehensive school counseling program supported by school administration and school districts.

The Rationale

Group counseling, which involves a number of students working on shared tasks and developing supportive relationships in a group setting, is an efficient, effective and positive way of providing direct service to students with academic, career and social/emotional developmental issues and situational concerns. By allowing individuals to develop insights into themselves and others, group counseling makes it possible for more students to achieve healthier personal adjustment, cope with the stress of a rapidly changing and complex environment and learn to communicate and cooperate with others. Research on group counseling suggests that this intervention is rather robust for a variety of academic, career and social/emotional concerns (Gerrity & DeLucia-Waack, 2007; McGannon, Carey, & Dimmitt, 2005; Paisley & Milsom, 2007; Whiston & Sexton, 1998).

The School Counselor's Role

The school counselor's training in group facilitation is unique to the school setting. School counselors provide group services to students and families and may utilize their specialized training to educate and inform school staff and administration on relevant professional issues or topics. Group services offered to students and families are based on individual student, school and community needs, which are assessed through survey data, a referral process or other relevant data. School counselors prioritize group offerings based on analysis of school data. Group counseling should be offered to all students in a PK-12 setting. School counselors have a responsibility to screen potential group members and address informed consent, purpose of the group, goals, limits to confidentiality and voluntary participation. Best practice will include parental consent and student agreement to participate (Falco 2011).

School counselors provide counseling sessions in individual or 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 and goal-focused and are short-termed in nature

School counselors do not provide therapy or long-term counseling in schools to address psychological disorders. However, school counselors are prepared to recognize and respond to student mental health crises and needs. School counselors address those barriers to student success by offering education, prevention and crisis and short-term intervention to include group counseling until the student is connected with available community resources. When students require long-term counseling or therapy, school counselors make referrals to appropriate community resources (ASCA, 2012).

Summary

Group counseling is an efficient and effective way to meet students' academic, career, social/emotional developmental and situational needs. Group counseling makes it possible for students to achieve healthier academic and personal growth in a rapidly changing global society. Group counseling is an integral part of a comprehensive school counseling program and should be included in comprehensive school counseling programs and supported by school administrators and school districts. The school counselor's training in group process benefits students, families, school staff and administration. Group counseling has a positive effect on academic achievement and personal growth.

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