The School Counselor and HIV/AIDS/STD Prevention

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position
The school counselor supports educational efforts related to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and collaborates with students, families, staff and the community to prevent infection and the spread of these diseases.

The Rationale
As children and adolescents explore multiple facets of their identities they may engage in behaviors that put their health at risk. School counselors have the opportunity and responsibility to provide students with developmentally appropriate, accurate and current health information regarding sexually transmitted diseases and to help them develop healthy attitudes and habits. It is important for all individuals to understand the causes and potential consequences of sexual behaviors and experimentation and learn multiple ways to prevent acquiring and/or spreading sexually transmitted diseases. School counselors are poised within the schools to provide this education and prevention information to students and their families. Students and families affected by HIV/AIDS/STDs have a right to confidentiality and equitable treatment in schools.

The School Counselor’s Role
School counselors communicate health information as part of the comprehensive school counseling program. School counselors collaborate with school health personnel to provide counseling, support and educational programs for students, staff and families. The school counselor addresses sexually transmitted diseases not as a moral issue but through prevention and nonbiased prevention efforts. The school counselor strives through professional development to maintain a current understanding of the recommendations and resources regarding the nature of HIV/AIDS/STDs and appropriate means of prevention.

The school counselor is familiar with and complies with school policy and federal, state and local laws as well as the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors regarding HIV/AIDS/STDs. The school counselor understands and upholds HIPAA and FERPA laws protecting confidentiality of students and families who are affected by HIV/AIDS/STDs. The school counselor is alert to any form of discrimination on the basis of a student’s HIV/AIDS/STDs status. The school counselor advocates on behalf of students and families affected by HIV/AIDS/STDs for equity and access to educational opportunities and is familiar with available resources to assist them.

The school counselor may advocate for the implementation of an HIV/AIDS/STD education curriculum as a part of the comprehensive school counseling program and in conjunction with the school’s health curriculum. The HIV/AIDS/STD education curriculum includes instruction for students, families and staff promoting healthy living and responsibility to self, family and society.

Specific elements may include general information about HIV/AIDS/STDs, including knowledge of:
- behaviors that put people at risk
- methods of transmission
- related nondiscrimination policies
- prevention efforts and
- accurate information dispelling myths and stereotypes

Summary
The school counselor promotes educational efforts related to HIV/AIDS/STDs while providing support and counseling to students and families affected by these diseases. The school counselor’s approach to HIV/AIDS/STD-related issues is through education and prevention efforts, keeping abreast of current recommendations and resources.
References


Internet Resources

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


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/what-we-do/adolescent-health