

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 student behavior and preventing disruptive student behavior (Fisher & Devlin, 2023). School counselors are not disciplinarians; they are a resource for school personnel in developing individual and schoolwide support systems and programs that encourage positive student behavior (Burks, 2023; Stone, 2023). School counselors collaborate with school personnel to establish policies that maintain safe schools where effective teaching and learning can take place (Burks, 2023).

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-driven, individualized, and positive framework. Hence, school counselors can promote these best practices to foster long-term effective learning environments for all students (Lloyd et al., 2023).

To most effectively promote student achievement and development, school counselors must maintain a strengths-based approach when working with students. Therefore, school counselors should not be involved in administering discipline. This support is especially crucial to move away from punitive disciplinary practices, which conflict with the current understanding of trauma and its impact on student well-being (Brown, 2025). The school counselor should be designated as an impartial and resourceful consultant, mediator, and student advocate. Furthermore, the school counselor should advocate against disparities in disciplinary actions that often target students of color, male students, and students with disabilities (Cruz et al., 2021). School counselor training best supports prevention efforts for school discipline and mental health. School counselors understand the impact of trauma and how it might influence student behavior. Therefore, school counselors coordinate services for students upon understanding the motive behind their behaviors, and thus, they are best positioned to serve as guides for discipline procedures (Fisher & Devlin, 2023).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors promote positive student behaviors to create a safe and effective learning environment for all students. It is the school counselor's

role to create more effective behavior change focused on positive, healthy behaviors. Within multitiered systems of support, school counselors:

- Promote and lead wellness and prevention efforts to create safe and supportive school environments
- Coordinate and facilitate programs that are beneficial for positive behaviors
- Use data to identify and advocate against disparities in school disciplinary actions that target specific student groups
- Lead individual and small-group counseling that encourages students to make positive behavior choices and accept responsibility for their actions
- Partake in student return-to-school meetings to create plans for student support
- Facilitate core counseling curriculum that contributes to safe classrooms
- Provide teacher support in the use of appropriate classroom management strategies
- Consult with families, teachers, administrators, and other educational partners to understand and promote developmentally appropriate student behavior
- Design and implement positive behavior and intervention support plans for individual students in collaboration with classroom teachers and other educational partners
- 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-school personnel conflicts
- Support practices that facilitate student wellbeing accounting for family's cultural perspectives
- Provide staff development on trauma sensitive approaches to address student behavior (Brown, 2025) and de-escalation practices (Fisher & Devlin, 2023), and emotional regulation of students and adults
- 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

Summary

School counselors understand system-level change in schools and may help inform school-wide climate and culture that ultimately shapes the approach to discipline (Goodman-Scott & Ziomek-Daigle, 2021). School counselors maintain positive relationships with students to promote student achievement and development. Finally, the school counselor should be 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 Responsive Counselor: <https://theresponsivecounselor.com/category-page/behavior-and-restorative-practices>

School Safety, Discipline, and Restorative Practices:
<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/school-safety-discipline-and-restorative-practices-resources>

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 that are addressed by school counselors 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 that 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 often experience challenges when enrolled in gifted education such as isolation, microaggressions, stereotype threat, and negative peer pressure. Due to the lack of diversity that exists, teachers may have difficulty meeting the needs of gifted students from multicultural backgrounds (Cohen, 2022).

Intentional and well-structured gifted and talented education programming offers a range of benefits that support both the academic, career, and personal development of gifted students. 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, multiple-criterion system (i.e., intellectual ability; academic performance; visual and performing arts ability; practical arts ability; creative-thinking ability; leadership potential; parent, teacher, peer nomination; expert assessment) when appropriate. The definition of gifted and talented requirements differs by state and district. School counselors are involved in the analysis of data obtained from multi-criterion 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 targeted social and emotional counseling through individual or small group psychoeducational services (Boulden et al., 2021) and promote supportive school climate for gifted and talented students through collaboration with teachers (Wood, 2018) and lead efforts amongst parents to ensure consistent support (Johnson et al., 2024).

School counselors also 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, but not limited to accelerated learning, advanced cognitive functioning, underachievement, dropping out of school, delinquency, difficulty in peer relationships, stress management, depression, anxiety, and twice exceptional.

School counselors play a pivotal role in advocating for all students, serving as crucial change agents who can support underrepresented gifted learners, challenge biased assessments and referral systems, connect families with available resources, and 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

Therefore, 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 (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 Safe Schools and Crisis Response

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

ASCA Position

School counselors lead safe school initiatives (ASCA, 2022), working collaboratively to promote student well-being and a positive school climate. Schoolwide safety programming benefits the overall school community by supporting student mental health, fostering strong relationships, and ensuring effective crisis prevention, intervention, and response (Charlton et al., 2021).

The Rationale

Crises can impact individual students, schools, and the overall community. Crises are traumatic for students and can have an adverse impact on their academic and socioemotional development (McDonald & Fenderson, 2024). All students need a physically and emotionally safe environment for learning and school counselors are uniquely positioned to lead 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 the needs of students. A crisis management plan is the most effective way to prepare for a crisis because it helps to ensure that school staff understand their roles and how they are to respond (McDonald & Fenderson, 2024). School counselors can respond to crises by providing counseling services, disseminating resources, making referrals as needed (McGough & Mylroie, 2024), and facilitating crucial communication between the school and community (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).

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, and make mental health referrals as needed. School counselors are familiar with the

44 school community and knowledgeable about the roles of community mental
45 health providers, so that students can be connected to proper support
46 (Ellington, et al., 2023).

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48 Safe school and crisis response literature (Ellington, et al., 2023; Garran &
49 Rasmussen, 2014; Rajan & Branas, 2018; Swartz et al., 2016) suggests
50 several essential crisis prevention and response preparedness practices in
51 which school counselors should engage, including, but not limited to the
52 following:

- 53
- 54 • providing individual counseling, group counseling, and classroom
- 55 lessons related to crisis management and school safety
- 56 • fostering safe and connected school environments by building rapport
- 57 with students
- 58 • assessing school climate to determine perceptions and beliefs about
- 59 crisis management and school safety
- 60 • participating in district and school response team planning and
- 61 practices, and helping ensure students and staff are able to
- 62 process/understand crisis response drills
- 63 • advocating for student safety by recommending that school personnel
- 64 put consistent procedures, communication, and policies in place
- 65 • collaborating with school administration to report and address any
- 66 concerns
- 67 • providing interventions for students at risk of dropping out or harming
- 68 self or others
- 69 • offering peer mediation training, conflict resolution programs, and
- 70 anti-bullying programs
- 71 • supporting student-initiated programs such as Students Against
- 72 Violence Everywhere
- 73 • implementing family, faculty, and staff education programs
- 74 • facilitating open communication between students and caring adults
- 75 • defusing critical incidents and providing related stress debriefing
- 76 • identifying and supporting students with mental health concerns
- 77 • promoting trauma-informed practices
- 78 • advocating for restorative justice programs
- 79 • partnering with community resources, particularly resources that can
- 80 provide information, support, and services during and after community
- 81 crises
- 82 • implementing safe reporting procedures that protect confidentiality,
- 83 privacy, and anonymity
- 84 • being accessible and available to students in an effort to foster
- 85 engagement and identify concerns related to safety
- 86

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 should avoid engaging in roles during drills that are incompatible with the school counseling role, such as acting as the school shooter/invaser and trying to get into locked rooms to test that teachers/students are following protocol.

Summary

School counselors are leaders in safe school initiatives and actively engage in fostering safety 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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DRAFT

The School Counselor and Student Mental Health

(Adopted 2009, Revised 2015, 2020, 2025)

ASCA Position

School counselors are school-based mental health professionals uniquely positioned to support students' well-being, using their specialized training to provide social-emotional support, crisis intervention, and preventative care. School counselors advocate for the mental health needs of all students by providing education to enhance mental health awareness, interventions and strategies for academic, career, and social-emotional development, short-term counseling, and referrals to community resources for long-term support. School counselors also collaborate with parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, and community partners to raise awareness of mental health resources, ensuring 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 school safety. Mental health challenges affect 1 in 5 children and youth, yet 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 should engage in school-family-community partnerships to create strategies to address social determinants of health, which requires school counselors to be knowledgeable and prepared to address systemic and structural injustices that influence 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 (ABES), 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 first seek support 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 attitudes, knowledge, and skills students should be able to 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 to their highest potential. This includes 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 focus their efforts on designing and implementing school counseling programs that promote academic, career, and social/emotional success for all students.

Therefore, school counselors:

- deliver instruction that proactively enhances awareness of mental health, promotes well-being, and seeks to remove the stigma associated with mental health issues
- provide students with appraisal and advisement addressing their academic, career, and social/emotional needs
- recognize mental health warning signs including, but not limited to:
 - 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
- educate teachers, administrators, families, and community partners about the mental health concerns of students, including recognition of

- the role environmental factors have in causing or exacerbating mental health issues, and provide resources and information
- collaborate and coordinate with school and community partners/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 parents' awareness of, 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, the distinction between public and private information, and consultation
 - help identify and address students' mental health issues while working within the:
 - ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors
 - ASCA Professional Standards & Competencies for School Counselors
 - Evolving national, state, and local legislation, which guides 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 the students' 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)

Summary

Students' unmet mental health needs pose barriers to learning and development. School counselors are school-based mental health professionals who 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 other educators and community partners to meet the needs of the whole child.

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The School Counselor's Role in 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 should not lead threat investigations. The school counselor's role in threat assessment should focus on prevention efforts that promote students' well-being and on responsive efforts to develop support plans for students in need of intervention.

The Rationale

Incidents threatening 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, but they should not 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).

While confidentiality is a foundational component of the counseling 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, counselors can maintain trust while

fulfilling their obligation to protect the well-being of all students (ASCA, 2022).

School counselors should lead efforts related to suicide risk assessment, while school administrators manage efforts related to threat assessment. However, although the situations are different, there is some overlap that must be considered (Vossekuil, et al., 2004). When assessing students for suicide risk, screening them for other safety concerns can help to connect them to resources and prevent violent acts from occurring. Additionally, students who are screened for potential violence toward others, should also be assessed to determine if they are a risk to themselves. It is important that the multidisciplinary threat assessment team be trained to recognize warning signs of distress and intervene accordingly (Ellington, 2023).

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). Listed below are key components of the school counselor's role as it relates to threat assessment:

- Participating in multidisciplinary threat assessment teams to provide input on student behavior, development, and needs.
- Advocating for a threat assessment team if one is not currently in place
- Conducting suicide risk assessment along with threat assessment to acquire a comprehensive understanding of student's needs (Ellington, et al., 2023).
- Facilitating periodic check-ins with students who are potentially at risk to provide additional support (Ellington, et al., 2023).
- Advocating for interventions that support the student's social/emotional well-being, mental health, and overall development.
- Focusing on the emotional needs and mental health of students rather than on punishment or discipline.
- Providing short-term counseling support to students involved in or affected by potential threats, helping them process emotions, manage stress, and access further support when needed.
- Educating the school community on preventative measures, such as fostering a safe school climate and recognizing early warning signs of distress.
- Avoiding responsibilities that conflict with the counselor's ethical role, such as interrogating students, conducting threat investigations, or determining punitive outcomes.

- Fulfilling the ethical responsibility to always act in the best interest of students, to promote their academic success, emotional well-being, and social development.

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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The School Counselor and Working with Students who are Undocumented

(Adopted 2017; revised 2019; revised 2025)

ASCA Position

School counselors support equitable access, ensuring the academic, social-emotional, and college and career development of all students, regardless of immigration status (ASCA, 2022). They advocate with and on behalf of students to ensure safety. Moreover, school counselors actively work to address conditions that do not reflect the school counseling professional ethics. School counselors advocate for the equitable right to access free and appropriate public education, and maintain culturally sustaining practices to help create a safe and inclusive school environment to enact systemic change for all students (ASCA, 2025, 2022).

The Rationale

The 1982 Plyler v. Doe Supreme Court ruling (U.S. Supreme Court, 1982) constitutionally protects access to PK-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 bridge college access (Diaz-Strong, 2025). Currently, twenty-three states extend 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 the school counselor role addresses academic, social-emotional, and college and career needs, 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; D.O.E, 2015). Such challenges can significantly impede academic, career, and social/emotional development resulting in issues of depression, anxiety, fear, structural racism, absenteeism, and acculturation issues (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Ee & Gándara, 2020; Torres-Olave et al., 2021). Consequently, school counselors are ethically poised to offer research-based services that meet the unique needs of students who are undocumented, which include culturally sustaining practices, strengths-based approaches, and school-based strategies within Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (Edirmanasinghe et al., 2022; Goodman-Scott et al., 2022; Ponterotto et al., 2008). These practices are vital tools for systemic change and are elaborated in the school counselor's role.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors focus their skills, time, and energy on delivering direct and indirect services to all students, 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 fosters 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 and evidence-based practices to address family separation, detention, deportation, and other immigration-related issues. Through comprehensive school counseling programs, school counselors ensure all students receive the academic, career, and social/emotional supports necessary to thrive in school and beyond.

The role of the school counselor includes:

- Supporting students who are undocumented by helping them gain access to an equitable education that meets their needs and prepares them for postsecondary access, as needed (e.g., referrals for ELL services, special education services, and medical treatment), including informing students and families about educational access and rights;
- Assisting 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;
- Providing social/emotional support for students affected by immigration stressors, including supporting the student if the student has been discriminated against or experiences to bullying or harassment;
- Advocating for the rights of all students, 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;
- Advocating for schools to be a safe haven for undocumented students and will not divulge confidential information to any outside agencies without proper legal documentation;
- Advocating against the practice of separating children from their families at U.S. borders (ASCA, 2018);
- Partnering with available community resources to support referrals in assisting families with various challenges surrounding their undocumented status, including recovery associated with keeping families intact, when possible, and trauma resulting from separation;
- Collaborating with school and district personnel and community partners to eliminate discriminatory language and actions towards students who are undocumented and their families;
- Informing school and district personnel, students, parents and the

community on policy, procedures, and rights of students who are undocumented and their families.

Summary

School counselors understand that students who are undocumented face additional legal, financial and social stressors and need additional support with these barriers as well as assistance with postsecondary goals. School counselors have a responsibility to provide services to all students regardless of their citizenship 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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The School Counselor and Use of Clerical 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 clerical support staff and that collaboration is key to ensuring all students receive access to a comprehensive school counseling program. Partnerships with clerical support staff allow school counselors to use their time more efficiently, and their professional expertise more effectively to meet student needs. Clerical support staff may include but are not limited to: administrative assistants, office personnel, counseling secretaries, registrars, and others in similar professional positions.

The Rationale

To achieve maximum effectiveness, the ASCA National Model recommends a student-to-school counselor ratio of 250:1 and that 80 percent 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 (US Dep. of ED, 2024). In addition, the ASCA National Model offers a framework for school counseling programs where more than a quarter of the themes focus on school counselors being actively involved in team efforts such as coordination, consultation, and collaboration (ASCA, 2025).

Hilts (2023) highlighted the challenges of high student-to-school-counselor ratios, emphasizing how they limit counselors' ability to effectively develop and implement programs for all students. Research consistently shows that larger caseloads make it difficult for school counselors to fulfill their responsibilities, often requiring them to shift toward proactive efforts and collaborative approaches with educational and community partners (Hilts, 2023). Thus, counselors need additional support to build strong partnerships and implement comprehensive school counseling programs effectively (Mason, 2023).

The Role of Clerical Support Staff in School Counseling Programs

School counseling program clerical support staff may assist in a variety of areas, such as: maintaining student records, organizing files, data entry, new student registration, and other similar clerical duties, allowing the school counselor to concentrate on delivering the school counseling program.

45 ASCA advocates for best practices including clear communication, well-
46 defined roles and responsibilities, established boundaries, and ethical
47 decision-making, to promote student success.

48
49 The school counseling clerical support staff should be sensitive to students'
50 concerns and be knowledgeable of the role of the school counselor and the
51 school counseling program. Clerical support staff should maintain the highest
52 level of confidentiality of student records and personal information. The
53 clerical support staff should defer to the school counselor for all services and
54 interventions that affect a student's mental health.

55 56 **The School Counselor's Role**

57 School counselors may assist in the selection of initial and ongoing
58 professional development for the school counseling clerical support staff to
59 ensure they understand the ethical standards required for the office (Atici,
60 2014). This training may cover areas such as human relations, multicultural
61 competence, ethical guidelines, community resources, and the importance of
62 maintaining confidentiality regarding student records.

63
64 Additionally, the school counselor is encouraged to collaborate with clerical
65 support staff to outline processes and activities that best support the school
66 counseling program. It is ASCA's stance that supervision of support staff falls
67 under the umbrella of administration, who work in conjunction with the
68 school counselor. When the school counselor works effectively through
69 collaboration with clerical support staff, the efficacy of the school counselor
70 is enhanced (Atici, 2014).

71 72 **Summary**

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

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