



ASCA Position Statements

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The School Counselor and Academic Development

(Adopted 2017; revised 2023)

ASCA Position

School counselors deliver school counseling programs that enhance student growth in three domain areas: academic, career, and social/emotional development. As a part of that program, school counselors implement strategies and activities to help all students enhance their academic development – the mindsets and behaviors students need to maximize their ability to learn – while recognizing that growth in all three domains is necessary for students to be successful now and later in life.

The Rationale

Federal initiatives such as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015) and state education accountability plans have stressed academic achievement as a measure of school success. As certified/licensed educators who improve student success for ALL students, school counselors align their school counseling program with the vision, mission, and goals of the school and district, emphasizing academic achievement. School counselors contribute to the educational and academic outcomes of the school by enhancing student engagement and performance (Akos et al., 2019; Shi & Brown, 2020) through designing, implementing and assessing school counseling programs (ASCA, 2019).

School counseling programs use data and data disaggregation to understand student needs and provide appropriate interventions. School counselors advocate and work to remove systemic barriers to ensure all students have the opportunity to achieve their academic goals at all grade levels reflecting their abilities and academic interests (Novakovic et al., 2020). School counselors use data-informed practices to ensure that all students can access appropriate, rigorous, relevant coursework and experiences. Because of their unique position within a school and their unique training, school counselors support students facing academic difficulties, mental health issues, family and social concerns, as well as career exploration and course planning to make school relevant.

School counselors play a critical role in ensuring schools provide a safe, caring environment and that students attain the necessary mindsets and behaviors to advance their academic achievement. School counselors work collaboratively with partners to ensure equity, access and academic success of all students (ASCA, 2019).

The School Counselor's Role

In their efforts to enhance student academic development, school counselors:

- Work collaboratively with school staff to develop a safe, caring and inclusive school culture (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2018)
- Design, implement and assess a school counseling program informed by disaggregated data identifying student needs
- Deliver information to students and teachers on best practices to attain mindsets and behaviors (i.e., learning strategies, self-management skills, social skills) for student success
- Provide relevance to students' academic effort and educational pursuits by helping them understand the connection between school and the world of work, assisting them in career planning and career-related goal setting
- Work with administrators, teachers and other school staff to create a school environment encouraging academic success and striving to one's full potential (Oehrtman, 2022; Oehrtman & Dollardhide, 2022)
- Encourage students to engage in challenging coursework and work to address and remove barriers to access the most rigorous coursework appropriate for each student
- Use disaggregated data to identify and address inequitable practices
- Provide opportunities for students to:
 - Enhance their belief in development of whole self and ability to succeed
 - Develop a positive attitude toward work and learning
 - Make decisions informed by evidence, considering others' perspectives and recognizing personal bias
 - Develop long and short-term academic goals
 - Demonstrate self-motivation and self-direction for learning
- Demonstrate positive, respectful and supportive relationships with students and adults (ASCA, 2021)
- Work to establish student opportunities for academic remediation as needed
- Emphasize family/caregiver-community-school relationships in addressing academic needs

Summary

Schools are evaluated on student outcomes, especially academic achievement, and school counselors play a critical role in ensuring schools create an environment conducive to academic success. School counselors provide a school counseling program that helps all students enhance their academic development to achieve and exceed high academic standards while recognizing that growth in all three domains of academic, career, and social/emotional development is necessary for students to be successful now and later in life.

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The School Counselor and Annual Performance Appraisal

(Adopted 1978; reaffirmed 1984; revised 1986, 1993, 2003, 2009, 2015; reviewed 1999; 2021)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The annual performance appraisal of school counselors should accurately reflect the unique professional training and practices of school counselors working within a pre-K–12 school counseling program. These written appraisals should use forms and tools specifically designed for school counselors, based on documents such as the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies and the School Counselor Performance Appraisal from the ASCA National Model.

The Rationale

The primary purposes of the annual performance appraisal are not only to ensure the school counselor’s effectiveness, impact, high-level performance and continued professional growth (Dimmitt, 2009) but also to demonstrate school counselors’ effectiveness and impact on student success as a part of the mission of their respective schools (ASCA, 2019a). School counselor appraisal should be based on professional standards of practice defined by school, district or state guidelines (ASCA, 2019a). The appraisal should include the components of self-evaluation, administrative evaluation and assessment of goal attainment (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). In addition, those who evaluate school counselors’ performance should be trained to understand school counselor evaluation (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012).

Because many administrators have not received training on how to evaluate school counselor performance, school counselors educate administrators about the appropriate role of the school counselor, ultimately to improve the school counseling program (Hatch et al., 2019). Annual agreements between administrators and school counselors can be mutually beneficial for understanding the school counselor role (Duslak & Geier, 2016). The ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies (2019b) and School Counselor Performance Appraisal template are designed to be used as planning tools when developing a sound school counselor assessment tool (ASCA, 2019a).

The School Counselor’s Role

The key purpose of the school counselor performance appraisal is to enhance the positive effect the school counselor and the school counseling program have on students and school stakeholders (Studer, 2016). The school counselor:

- initiates and documents the annual administrative conference with administrators, to be referenced during the annual performance appraisal
- consults with administrators regarding approved standards and competencies for school counselors and school counseling programs
- advocates for the integration of the ASCA National Model School Counselor Performance Appraisal and ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies as tools in the appraisal process
- presents outcome data to demonstrate effectiveness and accountability as a part of program evaluation
- educates stakeholders about the importance of appropriate school counselor appraisal tools and advocates for their use if such tools are not being used (ASCA, 2019a)
- collaborates with personnel across the school district (e.g., other school counselors, district-level student support services personnel, administrators, union representatives) to align actual school counseling roles with the evaluation tool (Young & Kaffenberger, 2018)
- collaborates with administrators and departments of education to develop appropriate tools to use in the evaluation of the school counselor and the school counseling program (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2017) (See examples at www.schoolcounselor.org/templates).

Summary

The annual performance appraisal of the school counselor should use criteria reflecting the current standards, competencies and performance appraisals of the school counseling profession. Annual performance forms and tools should also reflect these criteria.

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The School Counselor and Anti-Racist Practices

(Adopted 2021)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors work toward cultural competence and engage in anti-racist actions by advocating to change racist policies, procedures, practices, guidelines and laws contributing to inequities in students' academic, career and social/emotional development.

The Rationale

Racism remains a part of society in the United States and exists throughout all of our institutions. Unfortunately, the education system, as a subset of society, has contributed to the continuation of inequities specific to the school setting (LaForett & De Marco, 2020). The U.S. education system contributes to maintaining systems of oppression through racist policies, practices and guidelines that negatively affect all students but especially students from racially diverse backgrounds, including Black and Indigenous students, who historically have been distinctly affected by white supremacy in the United States (Steward, 2019). By supporting anti-racist policies through their actions and expressed anti-racist ideas, school counselors embrace their roles as social justice advocates and change agents who examine and dismantle systems of oppression (Kendi, 2019). It is essential for school counselors to engage in these leadership roles to address issues within education that promote inequity in achievement, access and opportunity, specifically for students from racially diverse backgrounds.

The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016) call for school counselors to be systemic change agents who embrace their roles as advocates, leaders and collaborators by providing “equitable educational access and success” (p.1). All educators, especially school counselors, have an obligation to work toward mitigating and/or ending racism and bias (ASCA, 2020) in an effort to lessen the impact of systemic racism on student development. Kohli et. al (2017) recognized the gaps in research related to the mechanisms (policies and procedures) of racial oppression in education. Still today these gaps exist, underscoring the need for school counselors to be intentional in examining and exploring data that uncovers disproportionality and racial inequities. To actively dismantle racist policies, procedures and practices within education, school counselors must embrace their ethical responsibilities within roles as social justice advocates, leaders and change agents to ensure all students, specifically students from racially diverse backgrounds, develop in healthy and successful ways in their academic, career and social/emotional development.

The School Counselor's Role

The role of the school counselor in ensuring anti-racist practices is to enhance awareness, obtain culturally responsive knowledge and skills, and engage in action through advocacy. As such, school counselors are called to:

Awareness/Reflection

- Reflect regularly on their cultural worldviews (values, beliefs, assumptions, biases), seeking to understand how these views influence their practice
- Engage in the personal work necessary to identify and acknowledge blind spots, uncover and mitigate the influence of all biases, particularly implicit biases, and act for real change
- Initiate and/or participate in “courageous conversations” that move to discomfort on topics of injustice, racism, privilege, oppression and related issues
- Reflect on feelings and sources of personal resistance that might arise in exploring topics of racism, privilege, oppression, marginalization and bias

Knowledge/Skills

- Participate regularly in school/district, independent and community-based professional development opportunities (ASCA, 2021)
- Consult and collaborate with people and organizations representative of the communities their schools serve
- Participate in supervision to obtain and refine culturally competent delivery and programmatic skills

- Engage in personal study of institutional and systemic racism in credible sources of research such as peer-reviewed journal articles and other scholarly literature
- Consult with professionals and community representatives to identify and engage in immersive experiences focused on obtaining knowledge and understanding in honoring cultures, languages, and traditions (Levy & Adjapong, 2020)

Action/Advocacy

School counselors work to end racism and bias by applying school counseling standards in practice (ASCA, 2020), such as:

- Collect and report data exposing inequitable outcomes
- Deliver lessons in classroom, small-group or individual settings that teach the ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success and address racism and bias
- Recognize and respond to incidents of racism and bias among students and staff
- Collaborate with families, educators, businesses and community organizations focused on anti-racism/bias
- Serve on school/district committees focused on anti-racism/bias, including committees addressing academic content
- Present workshops for parents/families on how to foster and support respectful student behaviors
- Lead efforts to challenge policies, procedures, practices, traditions or customs perpetuating intentional or unintentional racist and biased behaviors and outcomes (ASCA, 2021)
- Advocate for policies, practices and guidelines to dismantle racism and bias and promote equity for all
- Advocate for school counseling program resources and practices that acknowledge students from racially diverse backgrounds, and provide equitable opportunities for increased access to resources and support systems (ASCA, 2021)
- Advocate for and present anti-racism professional development opportunities within schools, districts and professional associations (ASCA, 2021)
- Advocate for change in policies, practices and procedures that have historically marginalized and oppressed groups, resulting in injustice, disproportionate outcomes, bias and the perpetuation of racist policies
- Provide appropriate services and supports for students from racially diverse backgrounds and their families who may demonstrate symptoms of racial trauma as a result of racist policies and practices (Atkins & Oglesby, 2019)
- Advocate for learning materials and resources in all content areas promoting diversity and inclusion, addressing ways students from racially diverse backgrounds have been harmed and oppressed, and considering the impact white supremacy and inequitable learning opportunities continue to have on American and global societies (Atkins & Oglesby, 2019)

Summary

School counselors continually work toward cultural competence and address racism and bias through the implementation of a data-informed school counseling program. Guided by the ASCA National Model (2019), school counselors shape ethical, equitable and inclusive school environments. School counselors engage in self-reflection, develop knowledge and skills, and advocate for the equitable treatment of all students through action to address broader issues of systemic and institutional racism. They seek to address policies, practices and guidelines contributing to the inequities experienced by students from racially diverse backgrounds in the pre-K–12 setting.

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The School Counselor and Bullying/Harassment Prevention and the Promotion of Safe Schools

(Adopted 1994/2000; Revised 2005, 2011, 2016, 2022)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors recognize the impact a safe and caring environment has on student achievement and social/emotional development. To foster a positive school climate, school counselors work to identify and remove systemic barriers that hinder a safe and caring school environment and culture. School counseling programs promote anti-bullying, anti-harassment and violence-prevention programs, schoolwide positive behavior interventions and support, along with comprehensive conflict-resolution programs to foster a positive school climate.

The Rationale

Promoting a positive school climate and developing positive relationships with caring adults is key to improving school success and reducing bullying, harassment and excessive disciplinary problems (DeVoogd, Lane-Garon, & Kralowec, 2016). School stakeholders recognize the need to provide a safe school climate, which leads to increased student achievement and decreased discipline (Mapp & Bergman, 2019). Incidents threatening student and staff safety include bullying, harassment, violence, weapons or gang behavior (Ercek & Birel, 2021).

Prevention activities are integral to creating a safe school environment free of fear, bullying, harassment and violence. Delivered by school counselors, teachers, administrators, student support personnel and qualified community experts, prevention programs increase the opportunity for improved academic achievement, appropriate behavior, positive relationships, successful conflict resolution, safe school climate and increased attendance (London & Standeven, 2017). Participating in prevention activities empowers and encourages students to work in collaboration with their school and community in creating a safe school environment and culture.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors collaborate with others in the school and community to promote safe schools and confront issues threatening school safety. School counselors encourage the development of local policies supporting a safe school environment, and they provide leadership to the school by assisting in the design and implementation of schoolwide prevention activities and programs. School counselors also advocate for state and national policies supporting these efforts. Additionally, school counselors recognize differentiated interventions are needed for bullying and resolving conflicts. Comprehensive anti-bullying/anti-harassment/violence-prevention and conflict-resolution programs require data-informed decision-making, coordination, instruction and program assessment. These programs are most effective when incorporated into the academic curriculum by all members of the school community (Irwin, et. al, 2021). The school counselor includes prevention programs as part of the school counseling program and ensures these programs include training in key areas for peacefully resolving issues such as:

- communication skills
- conflict-resolution skills
- decision-making skills
- development of cultural competence
- acceptance of differences
- intervention strategies for bullying/harassment
- recognition of early warning signs of violence
- prevention/intervention services
- appropriate use of technology and social media
- community involvement
- parent/guardian and faculty/staff education
- assessment of program effectiveness
- positive staff and student relationships
- mental health awareness training
- bystander training (e.g., QPR, SOS)

Summary

School counselors understand the positive effects of a safe and caring school environment. Through participation in prevention programs and activities aimed at anti-bullying, anti-harassment and violence prevention, school counselors foster opportunities for students to learn communication, problem solving and conflict resolution skills that help them achieve their goals and establish successful relationships. School counselors collaborate with teachers, instructional support personnel, administrators, families and the community to deliver prevention programs encouraging student growth and achievement and ensuring a safe school climate.

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The School Counselor and Career and Technical Education

(Adopted 2018)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors provide all students with counseling that facilitates academic, career and social/emotional development, helping all students develop plans for choosing a career. School counselors demonstrate their understanding of rigorous career technical education (CTE) programs when they join with other CTE stakeholders to advocate for these programs, which are designed to guide students to success in their chosen careers.

The Rationale

Ferguson and Lamback (2014) noted that increased attention on career-focused education has been the objective of many education reform efforts striving to strengthen educational relevance, improve students' school and career preparation planning and increase student readiness for workplace demands. According to Advance CTE (n.d.), an association of CTE state directors dedicated to linking learning and work, more than 12 million high school and college students are enrolled in CTE programs across the nation. These students are learning academic and technical skills to prepare for the world of work through the introduction of workplace competencies that are most often provided through a hands-on environment.

Employers frequently express frustration that new hires often lack well-developed communication skills, problem-solving skills, motivation, persuasion and critical-thinking skills that define soft skills (MacDermott & Ortiz, 2017). DiBenedetto and Myers (2016) noted that CTE courses provide “contextual real-world learning experiences that have engaged students and exposed them to opportunities to transfer and apply those skills in occupational settings” (p. 31). School counselors agree with DiBenedetto and Myers (2016) that CTE courses help students develop core academic skills; employability skills; and job-specific, technical skills related to career pathways.

In their study on the influence of career-focused education on career planning and development, Mobley, Sharp, Hammond, Withington and Stipanovic (2017) observed that real-world experiences and hands-on projects are generally much more likely to happen in CTE courses. They noted that CTE students are more likely to have a clear understanding about their career goals, and they concluded that non-CTE students would benefit with advising, real-world experiences and hands-on integrated CTE/academic projects like those available to CTE students.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors play an integral role through the context of school counseling programs to facilitate students' acquisition of attitudes, knowledge and skills needed to achieve positive postsecondary and career outcomes. School counselors at all levels recognize that employability skills align well with ASCA's Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success (2014). Consequently, they integrate a structure for organizing and delivering information about various careers and corresponding clusters such as The National Career Clusters Framework (Advance CTE, 2018).

This national framework or a similarly developed local framework informs the use of career development interventions for all students to help them navigate their way to postsecondary training intended to foster greater career success. When school counselors provide all students with information about high-quality CTE programs, they help all students consider all of their options following high school completion, including directly entering the world of work.

School counselors are aware that preparing 21st-century students to be career-ready requires collaborative efforts. As concluded by Conneely, Fitzgerald, Cook and Vrbka (2009), “There are advantages for CTE and comprehensive school counseling programs to coordinate their efforts to better serve all students in achieving postsecondary and career readiness” (p. 4). When school counselors demonstrate a shared understanding of CTE programs with other CTE stakeholders (e.g., teachers, administrators, legislators and employers), they are better equipped to encourage all students and their families to consider the advantages of enrolling in rigorous and relevant CTE courses.

A brief, “School Counselors as CTE Stakeholders,” prepared as a collaborative effort with ASCA and the National Association of State Directors of CTE, noted that school counselors can explain CTE options to students in the framework of career clusters and programs of study to inform student planning (Conneely et al., 2009). Mobley et al. (2017) added that students are often more motivated to stay in school when enrolled in career-focused education. Additionally, their study provides evidence that “an emphasis on career-focused education for all students can result in less stigmatization of two areas that are often negatively viewed by students: taking CTE or career-focused classes and visiting the school counselor” (p. 70).

The findings by Mobley et al. (2017) underscore the importance of school counselors using their leadership and influencing skills to create awareness of CTE programming options for students and their families. School counselors also advocate for the continued growth, development and expansion of rigorous CTE programs. These efforts provide an increase in awareness of CTE opportunities prior to entering postsecondary endeavors in hopes that students will be more informed and focused, offering students and their families savings of time and money on postsecondary training.

Summary

School counselors improve their service to their students when they understand CTE offers numerous benefits, including rigorous programs of study, academic and CTE curriculum and productive relationships within the business community. These advantages serve as effective means that school counselors can use to help all students make informed career decisions. Comprehensive school counseling programs provide a way for school counselors to help students understand all of their options that lead to the world of work, including CTE courses, through organized and structured appraisal and advisement.

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The School Counselor and Career Development

(Adopted 2017, revised 2023)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors deliver school counseling programs that enhance student growth in three domain areas: academic, career, and social/emotional development. As a part of that program, school counselors implement strategies and activities to help all students enhance their career development – the mindsets and behaviors students need to understand the connection between school and the world of work, plan for and make a successful transition to postsecondary education and work across the life span – while recognizing that growth in all three domains is necessary for students to be successful now and later in life.

The Rationale

As part of a school counseling program, school counselors provide resources and opportunities that help students explore their strengths and interests as well as career fields that align with these attributes. These efforts help students plan for and choose postsecondary pathways and create opportunities for students to develop college and career-readiness skills that help them successfully navigate postsecondary education and the world of work. School counselors recognize that each student, regardless of background, possesses unique interests, abilities, and goals, which will lead to future opportunities. By including culturally responsive practices within career development strategies, school counselors help historically marginalized populations create pathways for their future (Chan, 2019). Collaborating with students, families, educational staff and the community, school counselors work to ensure all students select a postsecondary path to productive citizenry (e.g., military, career technical certificate, or two-/four-year degree program) appropriate for the student.

School counselors recognize career education begins in kindergarten and is exemplified by students who are knowledgeable about options and are prepared to enroll and succeed in postsecondary experiences without the need for remediation. School counselors also recognize all students possess the skills and knowledge needed to qualify for and succeed in their chosen field (Mau & Li, 2018).

The School Counselor's Role

In their efforts to enhance students' career development, school counselors:

- Introduce students to careers and the world of work beginning in elementary grades (PreK–3)
- Produce developmentally and age-appropriate connections to the world of work
- Collaborate to provide learning and experiential opportunities for students to acquire behaviors and skills necessary for career readiness (Limberg et al., 2021)
- Work with students to identify their interests, abilities, specific career clusters (Cicco, 2018) and postsecondary plans
- Help students plan the transition from school to postsecondary education and/or the world of work (ASCA, 2021)
- Advise students on multiple postsecondary pathways (e.g., college, career-specific credentials and certifications, apprenticeships, military, service-year programs, full-time employment with a family-supporting wage or with sufficient wage for sustaining an independent lifestyle)
- Connect students to early-college programs (e.g., dual credit/dual enrollment, AP, IB)
- Collaborate with administrators, teachers, staff and decision makers to create a postsecondary-readiness and college-going culture
- Provide and advocate for all students' college and career awareness through exploration and postsecondary planning and decision-making, which supports students' right to choose from the wide array of options after completing secondary education
- Identify gaps in college and career access and the implications of such data for addressing both intentional and unintentional biases related to college and career advising and counseling
- Work with teachers to integrate career education learning in the classroom lessons
- Provide opportunities for all students to develop learning strategies, self-management skills, and social skills that lead to a positive attitude toward learning, a strong work ethic, and an understanding that lifelong learning is necessary for long-term career success
- Engage in professional development that addresses career trends
- Practice self-reflection and growth involving traditional career roles and expand equity and access through that growth

Summary

School counselors provide resources and opportunities that help students explore their strengths and interests as well as career fields that align with these attributes. School counselors provide a school counseling program that helps all students enhance their career development and successfully navigate postsecondary education and the world of work, while recognizing that growth in all three domains of academic, career, and social/emotional development is necessary for students to be successful now and later in life.

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The School Counselor and Character Education

(Adopted 1998; Revised 2005, 2011, 2016, 2022)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors cultivate students' character development by integrating character education programs into their school counseling program. The school counselor endorses and promotes the infusion of character education in the school curriculum by fostering participation of the entire school community.

The Rationale

Character education involves “the embodiment of multidimensional virtues as the core component of human moral functioning” (Brunsdon & Walker, 2021, p.3). The school counselor understands that teaching universal virtues that help people live and work together promotes healthy student development and academic achievement through reduced problem behavior, lower discipline rates and improvement in student self-concept (Brunsdon & Walker, 2021, Parker, et. al, 2010).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors, along with teachers, administrators, family and the community, share the responsibility of teaching character education virtues. School counselors encourage character education activities by means of:

- developing a school philosophy and mission statement supporting positive character development
- establishing positive family-school-community partnerships
- implementing school counseling curriculum activities that promote positive character development while helping all students develop clear academic, career and social/emotional goals
- advocating for discipline policies that nurture the development of appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes
- utilizing proactive counseling methods that reinforce character education and lead to an increase in positive school climate
- encouraging student participation in extracurricular activities that include the involvement of students, school staff, parents/guardians and community members
- teaching skills in decision-making, conflict resolution, leadership and problem solving
- teaching communication etiquette in the technological world
- involving students in the development of school rules
- integrating multicultural competence and diversity appreciation into curriculum and activities
- developing student recognition programs focused on character traits involving families and communities in the character education program

School counselors collaborate with teachers, administrators, families and the community to teach and model behaviors that enhance each student's academic, career and social/emotional development essential to making appropriate, healthy decisions.

Summary

Character education helps students achieve academic, career and social/emotional development goals to become positive contributors to society. The school counselor provides leadership and collaborates with teachers, administrators and the school community to promote character education for all students as an integral part of school curriculum and activities.

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The School Counselor and Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention

(Adopted 1981; revised 1985, 1993, 1999, 2003, 2015, 2021)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

It is the school counselor's legal, ethical and moral responsibility to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to the proper authorities. School counselors work to identify the behavioral, academic and social/emotional impact of abuse and neglect on students and ensure the necessary supports for students are in place.

The Rationale

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (2021) notes that most states recognize four major types of maltreatment: "neglect, physical abuse, psychological maltreatment and sexual abuse" (n.p.) and also points to medical neglect and sex trafficking as other forms of abuse identified by some states. The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, 2021) indicates the incidents of child abuse and neglect continue to be a significant concern. Child abuse and neglect is a public mental health issue that must be addressed through intervention and advocacy. A child who is a victim of abuse or neglect may experience consequences including, but not limited to, immediate physical, emotional or psychological harm; future victimization or perpetration; substance abuse; lower self-worth; and lower educational attainment.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors are among those mandated by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974, Public Law 93-247 to report suspected abuse and neglect to proper authorities and are critical in early detection and recognition of abuse. It is imperative that school counselors gain essential knowledge of policies and referral procedures by staying current on reporting requirements and state laws. Laws and definitions pertaining to child abuse and neglect vary among states; therefore, school counselors should commit themselves to become familiar with and abide by child protective services laws in their respective state (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, 2021b).

In addition to mandated reporting, school counselors:

- Understand child abuse and neglect and its impact on children's academic, career and social/emotional development
- Provide interventions promoting resiliency, healthy interpersonal and communication skills and self-worth
- Make referrals to outside agencies when appropriate
- Engage families in the school community
- Identify barriers and limitations that affect healthy family functioning and may lead to child abuse or neglect
- Identify instances of child abuse and neglect and respond on both individual and systemic levels
- Provide professional development in consultation on child abuse to school staff, families and the school community

School counselors serve as child advocates (ASCA, 2019), recognizing and understanding the problem, knowing the reporting procedures and participating in available child abuse information programs. School counselors play an integral role in helping promote child welfare by providing direct and indirect student services. Those services include advocating for students' needs by addressing issues that could affect their academic, career and social/emotional development.

Summary

School counselors are a key link in the child abuse prevention network. School counselors are responsible for reporting suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. School counselors must be able to guide and assist abused and neglected students by providing appropriate services. School counselors are committed to providing high-quality services, with research-based intervention techniques, to children who are victims of abuse and neglect.

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The School Counselor and Children Experiencing Homelessness

(Adopted, 2010; revised, 2018)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors recognize that homelessness/displacement may greatly affect the whole child, encompassing mental, physical, social/emotional and academic development. School counselors help to identify students who are experiencing homelessness. As social justice advocates, it is school counselors' duty to recognize and work with students around their specific strengths. School counselors collaborate with community stakeholders to connect students and their families who are experiencing homelessness to community supports, work to remove barriers to academic success and implement responsive prevention and intervention programs for children experiencing homelessness.

The Rationale

Homelessness is defined by the McKinney-Vento Act as youth who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence (for complete definition, see U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Census data from the U.S. Department of Education notes 2,483,539 children or one in every 30 children experienced homelessness in the United States in 2013 (American Institutes for Research, 2014). Students experiencing homelessness have increased concerns for developmental issues pertaining to physical development, mental health and school success (Tobin, 2016) as well as social/emotional development (Haskett, Armstrong, & Tisdale, 2016).

Researchers have found that students experiencing homelessness are more likely to be retained and perform below their peers in grades earned and test scores (Masten, Fiat, Labella, & Strack, 2015). They have a significantly higher prevalence of developmental delays in communication (Tobin, 2016) as well as social/emotional development (Haskett et al., 2016). Homelessness in youth may also affect neurocognitive functioning (e.g., poor decision making, recklessness behaviors, risk taking and emotional outbursts), academic achievement and may lead to an increased likelihood of facing adverse childhood experiences such as trauma and abuse (Edidin, Ganim, Hunter, & Karnik, 2012). Close to 75 percent of homeless students drop out before graduating from high school (Abdul Rahman, Fidel Turner & Elbedour, 2015).

The McKinney-Vento Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), outlines the rights of homeless students and creates directives for schools to ensure students are able to enroll and succeed in school (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). This charge includes removal of institutional barriers within schools, such as transportation, immunization and physical examination requirements, fees, residency and birth certificate requirements and lack of school records impeding homeless families' ability to enroll their children in schools.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors:

- Advocate for students and collaborate with their parents/guardians to reduce barriers related to school enrollment, academic success and appropriate educational placement
- Recognize the strengths of the individual student and all of those who have experienced homelessness
- Attain knowledge for assisting unaccompanied youth per specific state guidelines, following legal and ethical codes
- establish educational and preventive programs for homeless parents and children
- Collaborate with school and community personnel and coordinate appropriate support services specific to basic, academic and social/emotional needs
- Increase stakeholder awareness and understanding of the McKinney-Vento Act, ESSA and the rights of homeless students
- Assess students for common associated concerns such as adverse childhood experiences and refer students for additional support as appropriate.

Summary

School counselors promote awareness and understanding of the issues students face when experiencing homelessness. School counselors recognize the strengths these students bring to school from experiencing homelessness. School counselors collaborate with students, parents/guardians and community stakeholders to overcome the barriers to academic, career and social/emotional success associated with homelessness.

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The School Counselor and College Access Professionals

(Adopted 2016; Revised 2022)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors play a critical role in preparing all students for lifelong learning and success. To ensure students have the opportunity to reach their full potential, school counselors collaborate and consult with community-based organizations, including college access organizations and college access professionals, within the framework of a school counseling program.

The Rationale

Implementation of a school counseling program involves working collaboratively with community-based organizations, including college access organizations and college access professionals, to help meet students' academic and career development needs. Community-based organizations often have expertise and time to work with historically marginalized populations and should be part of the total communitywide approach to postsecondary education.

Community-based organizations can provide tremendous value to the work school counselors do in the context of improving school-based programs and student outcomes. The Council of National School Counseling and College Access Organizations, in collaboration with ASCA, acknowledges, the various professions that play a role in facilitating the process of aiding students in their postsecondary endeavors (Richardson, et al., 2022). College access professionals often include school counselors, college advisors, professional/trained mentors, career advisors and other specialists trained to serve students in navigating their college and career pathway.

Clear agreements between the school and the college access professional or community-based organization should be in place. The agreements should outline:

- a definition and delineation of functions and responsibilities of the college access professional, with particular focus on the limitations college access professionals must have in students' social/emotional developmental needs
- clear language stating the college access professionals' role is in support of the work of the school counselor rather than a replacement for the role/function of the school counselor
- a list of the student records or personal information college access professionals can access
- expectations that college access professionals must maintain the highest level of confidentiality related to student records or personal information
- the responsible supervisory entity for the college access professional, which includes a statement indicating the need for college access professionals to make referrals to this entity in the event students present issues beyond the scope of their college access training and skills
- the responsible compensation entity

College access professionals can be employed by schools, housed in school facilities or be based in off-campus facilities. School counselors serve as a catalyst in building collaborative partnerships with college access professionals, identifying community needs in college access and assisting in the identification of students/student groups who would benefit from the expertise and time provided by college access professionals (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2012, Bryan et al., 2017). Benefits from this collaboration may include:

- increased postsecondary attainment rates, particularly among low-income and marginalized student populations (Perna, 2015)
- mentoring opportunities, individualized needs-based services and academic remediation to help students access postsecondary opportunities
- opportunities for students to enroll in postsecondary courses or programs to prepare for postsecondary education
- partnerships with college access programs, scholarship programs, the Department of Education and mentoring services that raise awareness of the importance of postsecondary training

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors understand that partnerships are an integral component of college readiness (Bryan et al., 2017). As such, collaborative partnerships are defined as community-based organizations within the framework of a school counseling program. School counselors actively seek to assist students in preparing for postsecondary success. Through collaboration and consultation with college access professionals, school counselors can increase the scope of their work and provide communitywide benefits within a school counseling program approach by:

- initiating and sustaining conversations regarding community needs with community stakeholders
 - planning a communitywide response to college preparation and access
 - setting communitywide goals and action plans for college access
 - sharing common data with community stakeholders
- implementing collaborative interventions in college access
- helping students complete the steps necessary for participating in college access programs or postsecondary programs, such as registering for tests or applying for financial aid
 - referring/nominating students for programs

Summary

School counselors can promote college access by fostering family and community-based partnerships that focus on access, knowledge sharing and the creation of college opportunities for K–12 students. College access organizations and professionals can provide beneficial academic and career opportunities for students by extending the reach of school counseling programs. Effective collaborations include a clear delineation of function and roles. School counselors are the catalyst for establishing the collaborative partnerships that help students receive these benefits.

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The School Counselor and Confidentiality

(Adopted 1974; reviewed and reaffirmed 1980; revised 1986, 1993, 1999, 2002, 2008, 2014, 2018)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors recognize their primary obligation regarding confidentiality is to the student but balance that obligation with an understanding of the family or guardians' legal and inherent rights to be the guiding voice in their children's lives (ASCA, 2016).

The Rationale

ASCA and its members affirm their belief in the student's right to be treated with respect and dignity (ASCA, 2016, A.1.a). It is the school counselors' responsibility to fully respect the right to privacy of those with whom they enter a counseling relationship and to provide an atmosphere of trust and confidence (Lazovsky, 2008; ASCA, A.2.).

A school counselor, who is in a counseling relationship with a student, has an ethical and legal obligation to keep information contained within that relationship. Confidentiality is the ethical and legal term ascribed to the information communicated within the counseling relationship, and it must be maintained unless keeping that information confidential leads to foreseeable harm. "Serious and foreseeable harm is different for each minor in the school setting and is determined by students' developmental and chronological age, the setting, parental rights and the nature of harm" (ASCA, 2016, A.2.e).

Exceptions to confidentiality exist, and students should be informed when situations arise in which school counselors have a responsibility to disclose information obtained in counseling relationships to others to protect students, themselves or other individuals. Privileged communication between a school counselor and a student is a legal term granting protection to information shared in a counseling relationship only if said privilege is granted by federal or state statute. If privilege applies it can provide additional safeguards to confidential information.

The School Counselor's Role

The role of the school counselor regarding confidentiality is:

- To support the students' right to privacy and protect confidential information received from students, the family, guardians and staff members
- To explain the meaning and limits of confidentiality to students in developmentally appropriate terms
- To provide appropriate disclosure and informed consent regarding the counseling relationship and confidentiality
- To inform students and the family of the limits to confidentiality when:
 - the student poses a danger to self or others
 - there is a court-ordered disclosure
 - consulting with other professionals, such as colleagues, supervisors, treatment teams and other support personnel, in support of the student
 - privileged communication is not granted by state laws and local guidelines (e.g., school board policies)
 - the student participates in group counseling
 - substance use and treatment are concerns (CFR 42, Part 2; 2017)
- To keep personal notes separate from educational records and not disclose their contents except when privacy exceptions exist
- To seek guidance from supervisors and appropriate legal advice when their records are subpoenaed
- To communicate highly sensitive student information via face-to-face contact or phone call and not by e-mail or inserting into the educational record
- To request to a court of law that a student's anonymity be used if records are subpoenaed
- To be aware of federal, state and local security standards related to electronic communication, software programs and stored data
- To advocate for security-level protocols within student information systems allowing only certain staff members access to confidential information

- To assert their belief that information shared by students is confidential and should not be revealed without the student's consent
- To adhere to all school board policy and federal and state laws protecting student records, health information and special services (i.e., HIPAA, FERPA, IDEA)

Summary

The counseling relationship between students and their school counselor requires an atmosphere of trust and confidence. Students must trust the school counselor to be able to enter into a meaningful and honest dialogue with the school counselor (Iyer & Baxter-MacGregor, 2010). However, students should be informed that exceptions to confidentiality exist in which school counselors must inform others of information they obtained in the counseling relationship to prevent serious and foreseeable harm to students themselves or others and if it is legally required.

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The School Counselor and Corporal Punishment

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

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

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

The Rationale

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

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

The School Counselor's Role

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

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

- using behavioral contracts
- setting realistic expectations
- enforcing rules consistently
- creating appropriate and logical consequences for inappropriate behavior
- conferencing with students and/or families with school personnel for planning and reinforcing acceptable behavior
- emphasizing students' positive behaviors
- teaching pro-social, mediation and resolution skills as methods of problem solving
- providing information on parenting programs
- promoting emotional regulation
- teaching and implementing mindfulness practices

Summary

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

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The School Counselor and Credentialing and Licensure

(Adopted 1990; revised 1993, 1999, 2003, 2009, 2015, 2021)

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Effective school counselor credentialing or licensing laws include a definition of the profession, minimum qualifications for entry into the profession and requirements for continuing professional development. All state education certification or licensure agencies are encouraged to adopt the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies for school counselor credentialing or licensing.

The Rationale

Legislation and/or regulation for school counselor credentialing or licensure ensure students and stakeholders are served by highly qualified and trained professionals. Such legislation should include:

- a description of the role of the school counselor as defined in the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019b)
- standards for entry into the profession that require, at minimum, a master's degree in school counseling or the substantial equivalent
- requirements for continuing education to further develop skills as a school counselor

Similarly, effective legislation for school counselor certification or licensure reflects the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies (ASCA, 2019b), includes a description of roles for school counselors as defined in the ASCA National Model (2019a) and establishes state standards for school counselor preparation programs aligned with the ASCA School Counselor Preparation Program Standards (ASCA, 2019c).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors must be professionally credentialed or licensed in the state in which they practice. School counselors work with state school counseling associations, school counseling preparation program and legislative bodies to advocate for alignment of credentialing or licensing requirements (Carey, et al., 2019) with the ASCA Professional Standards & Competencies for School Counselors. All school counselors are expected to:

- be culturally competent (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2017)
- have skills in evidence-based educational and school counseling practices (ASCA, 2019b; Zyromski, et al., 2018)
- focus on the mindsets and behaviors for student success, including K–12 college- and career- readiness standards for every student, with specific attention to academic, career and social/emotional needs (ASCA, 2019a)
- possess leadership and advocacy skills (Havlik, et al., 2019)
- engage in professional development to maintain credentials and licensure to stay current with best practices in school counseling (ASCA, 2016; ASCA, 2019a)
- have consultation skills and the ability to work collaboratively with educational professionals and stakeholders in the school and community (Bryan, et al., 2017)
- be able to develop, implement and assess school counseling programs (Young & Kaffenberger, 2015)

School counselors collaborate with district and state education personnel and local or state school counselor associations to provide ongoing professional development specifically for school counselors, aligned with the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies (2019b).

Summary

Effective state school counselor credentialing/licensing laws and regulations align with the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies (2019b) to ensure highly qualified and trained school counselors.

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The School Counselor and Cultural Diversity

(Adopted 1988; revised 1993, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2015, 2021)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors have a professional and ethical responsibility to expand personal multicultural and social justice advocacy, awareness, knowledge and skills to be an effective, culturally competent school counselor. School counselors work toward cultural competence and cultural humility to provide culturally sustaining school counseling. School counselors demonstrate responsiveness by collaborating with students and stakeholders in support of a school and community climate that embraces cultural diversity and helps to promote all students' academic, career and social/emotional development.

The Rationale

Diversity is a “range of cultures and subcultures that represent attitudes, beliefs, values, rituals, symbols, norms and conventions, customs, behaviors and ideologies” (Stone & Dahir, 2016, p. 294). Culture is a powerful and pervasive influence on the attitudes and behaviors of students, stakeholders and school counselors. In response to cultural diversification in schools and communities, school counselors must be more globally responsive and culturally sustaining in the educational and social environment than ever before.

As a part of this charge, school counselors need to continue to enhance knowledge and awareness of prejudice, power and various forms of oppression and utilize culturally responsive skills to support ever-changing student needs (ASCA Ethical Standards, B.3.i, 2016). In support of students, school counselors implement “equitable academic, career and social/emotional developmental opportunities for all students” (ASCA Ethical Standards, 2016, A.3.b.). It is an “expectation, not the exception” for school counselors to integrate multiculturalism and social justice perspectives into their work as advocates and leaders (Ratts and Greenleaf, 2017, p.8).

The School Counselor's Role

The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016) and a “host of voices in school counseling literature point to school counselor advocacy as a key factor in making progress toward this vision of equitable schools and communities. Our vision for equitable, inclusive and culturally sustaining schools can inform our advocacy goals as people and as professionals” (Grothaus, et al., 2020, p. 26).

School counselors can provide culturally responsive counseling by:

- exploring their personal knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about working with diverse student populations
- ensuring each student has access to a school counseling program that advocates for all students in diverse cultural groups
- addressing the impact poverty and social class have on student achievement
- identifying the impact of family culture upon student performance
- delivering culturally sensitive instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling
- ensuring all students' rights are respected and all students' needs are met
- consulting and collaborating with stakeholders to create a school climate that welcomes and appreciates the strengths and gifts of culturally diverse students
- using data to measure access to programs and to close disproportionate gaps in opportunity, information and resources that affect achievement among diverse student populations (Henfield et al., 2014)
- enhancing their own cultural competence and facilitating the cultural awareness, knowledge and skills of all school personnel (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2017; Ratts, et al., 2015)

A culturally sustaining school counseling program includes a school counseling program advisory council that incorporates diverse perspectives and has representation reflecting the school's cultural census. Advisory councils can support the school counseling program in the development of goals, culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy. and strategic planning, as well as community bridging, awareness and advocacy (Grothaus, et al., 2020).

Summary

School counselors implement a culturally sustaining school counseling program that creates systematic change through growth, self-awareness, humility, knowledge of worldviews and cultural identities (Grothaus, et al., 2020). School counselors collaborate with all stakeholders to provide relevant interventions and strategies that advocate for and promote social justice for all students (Ratts, 2015, as cited in Grothaus, et al., 2020). Through their school counseling programs, school counselors are positioned to actively become a part of the solution where cultural diversity is fully embraced in schools (ASCA, 2020).

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The School Counselor and Discipline

(Adopted 1989; revised 1993, 1999, 2001, 2007, 2013, 2019)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors have specialized training and skills in promoting appropriate student behavior and preventing disruptive student behavior. School counselors are not disciplinarians but should be a resource for school personnel in developing individual and schoolwide discipline procedures. School counselors collaborate 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 (Diliberti, Jackson, & Kemp, 2017). Research suggests such behavior negatively affects classroom learning and school climate (Kremer, Flower, Huang & Vaughn, 2018). To establish and maintain safe and respectful learning environments, school systems must employ adequate mental health personnel and seek effective discipline programs with the commitment and input of all school personnel, including school counselors (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen & Pollitt, 2013). To most effectively promote student achievement and development, school counselors must maintain strength-based relationships with students and, therefore, are not involved in administering discipline. The school counselor should be, by policy, designated as a neutral and resourceful consultant, mediator and student advocate.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors promote positive student behaviors to create a safe, effective learning environment for all students. It is not the school counselor's role to mete out punishment but instead to help create effective behavior change focused on positive, healthy behaviors. Within multitiered systems of support, school counselors:

- Promote wellness and lead prevention efforts to create safe and supportive school environments
- Lead individual and small-group counseling that encourages students to make positive behavior choices and accept responsibility for their actions
- Provide school counselor curriculum and contribute to safe classrooms through appropriate classroom management strategies
- 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, 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 strategies such as trauma-sensitive approaches (Reinbergs & Fefer, 2018), restorative practices (Smith, 2017) and emotional regulation of adults and students (Bowers, Lemberger-Truelove, & Brigman, 2017)
- 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

School counselors have specialized training and skills in promoting appropriate student behavior and preventing disruptive student behavior. School counselors maintain nonthreatening relationships with students to best promote student achievement and development and serve as a resource for school personnel in developing individual and schoolwide discipline procedures. School counselors should be, by policy, designated as neutral and resourceful consultants, mediators and student advocates. It is not the school counselor's role to serve as an enforcement agent for the school but rather 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 School Counselor and Equity for All Students

(Adopted 2006, revised 2012, 2018)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors recognize and distinguish individual and group differences and strive to equally value all students and groups. School counselors are advocates for the equitable treatment of all students in school and in the community.

The Rationale

According to the U.S. Department of Education, in 2014, the number of students of color in U.S. public schools surpassed that of white students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). However, white students continue to graduate from high school at higher rates than black and Hispanic students (Kena et al., 2015). In addition, an achievement gap exists along socioeconomic lines.

Many students of color, first-generation and low-income students aspire to college; however, the college application process can present significant obstacles (Page & Scott, 2016). Some students in schools report there is no adult in the school with whom they feel they can discuss these issues, and many of these students come from underrepresented social or cultural groups. These students cannot always rely on their parents for college information and must instead turn to their high schools, where school counselors are in a position proven to increase access for students. School counselors can also play a role in assisting students in identity development contributing to their success (Maxwell & Henriksen, 2012).

Historically, underrepresented populations have faced barriers to participating in a rigorous curriculum and higher-level classes (Vazquez & Altshuler, 2017). School counselors, teachers, administrators and other school staff can be involuntary gatekeepers of access to these classrooms. Research finds that when students and school counselors are able to connect, school counselors have the potential to become empowering agents (Emde, 2015). When students feel like they are being treated in a biased or negative manner, they often exhibit self-destructive behaviors such as truancy, withdrawal, acting out and nonparticipation in class activities. Conversely, when students believe they are treated fairly, they are more likely to be engaged in school, talk about pressing issues and participate in class activities.

Family participation in the college-going decision-making process is critical (Bryan et al., 2011). School counselors are in a position to seek family engagement in the college-going process to ensure students from diverse backgrounds are included. The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016) supports this concept, stating that all students have the right to a school counselor who acts as a social-justice advocate, supporting students from all backgrounds and circumstances and consulting when the school counselor's competence level requires additional support.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors develop and implement a school counseling program promoting equity and access for students. School counselors work to help close achievement, opportunity, attainment and funding gaps in their schools, districts and communities. School counselors are mindful of school and community perceptions of the treatment of underrepresented groups and understand the importance of collaborating with school and community groups to help all students succeed. School counselors demonstrate cultural competence.

School counselors promote equitable treatment of all students by:

- Using data to identify gaps in achievement, opportunity and attainment
- Advocating for rigorous course and higher education for underrepresented groups.
- Maintaining professional knowledge of the ever-changing and complex world of students' culture
- Maintaining knowledge and skills for working in a diverse and multicultural work setting
- Informing school staff of changes regarding different groups within the community
- Promoting the development of school policies leading to equitable treatment of all students and opposing school policies hindering equitable treatment of any student

- Promoting access to rigorous standards-based curriculum, academic courses and learning paths for college and career for all students
- Developing plans to address over- or underrepresentation of specific groups in programs such as special education, honors, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate
- Creating an environment that encourages any student or group to feel comfortable to come forward with problems
- Collaborating with families in seeking assistance services for financial literacy, job skills and placement and free services (such as childcare assistance) as well as providing parents educational opportunities to assist them in supporting their students' education
- Acting as a liaison between home and school promoting an understanding and encouraging creative solutions for students handling multiple responsibilities beyond a typical load

Summary

School counselors recognize and distinguish individual and group differences and strive to value all students and groups equally. School counselors promote the equitable treatment of all students in school and the community.

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The School Counselor and Gender Equity

(Adopted 1983; revised 1993, 1999, 2002, 2008, 2014, 2020)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors are committed to creating an emotionally, intellectually and physically safe environment for all students and to using inclusive language and positive modeling of gender equity. Creating this environment facilitates and promotes the development of each individual by removing bias and stereotypes for all students in school.

The Rationale

To expand the range of options available to students, it is important that school counselors become acutely aware of ways in which language, organizational structures, leader selection, expectations of individuals and activity implementation affect opportunities based on gender. Many federal and state laws have been passed protecting individuals from gender discrimination in education and work (e.g., Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967; Civil Rights Act of 1964; Equal Pay Act of 1963; Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009; Taylor, 1989; Title IX, 2018; Vocational Amendments of 1976; Women’s Educational Equity Act of 1974). These important legal mandates ensure equal treatment under the law but do not necessarily change ingrained attitudes and behaviors.

The School Counselor’s Role

School counselors’ knowledge of human development and skills in assisting students and families in overcoming barriers to learning positions them to teach children healthy interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, to make strong connections with educational opportunities in schools and to ensure every child learns in a safe, healthy and supportive environment. School counselors use inclusive language to reflect identities across the gender spectrum and have equitable expectations of all students. School counselors are sensitive to those aspects of interpersonal communication and organization that provide working models of gender equity and equality. They also promote gender equity through large- and small-group instruction.

School counselors are vigilant to the harmful effects of stereotypical gender-role expectations. As an example, research indicates young children demonstrate basic knowledge about gender stereotypes as they engage in gender segregation as early as preschool in their play and activities that guide their preferences for occupations and career goals (Mulvey & Killen, 2015). Also, school counselors are aware that as children develop their self-concept, they begin to rule out occupations considered incompatible and usually never reconsider them unless they are encouraged to pursue them (Gottfredson, 1996; Gottfredson & Lapan, 1997; Oliveira et al., 2020).

School counselors proactively seek to counter negative or limiting messages and work to prevent bullying and discrimination through direct and indirect student services. Consequently, school counselors emphasize a person’s competence and model positive gender equity while assisting students in positive gender identity as each student currently identifies. In regard to gender expression, Anderson (2020) notes the importance of autonomy of adolescents in developing healthy familial relationships; thus, the school counselor works with families to support the autonomy of the student while recognizing the rights of parents/guardians to guide their children. School counselors become sensitive to ways in which interpersonal attitudes and behaviors can have negative effects on others and provide constructive feedback on negative and positive use of inclusive language and organizational structure.

Summary

School counselors are committed to equity and support consciousness-raising within their profession. School counselors support equal opportunity for all to break through stereotypical gender-based behaviors and expectations. School counselors model inclusive language reflecting identities across the gender spectrum. School counselors actively advocate for equitable policies, procedures, practices and attitudes embracing equity in opportunities and access to resources for all students and colleagues.

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Human Rights Campaign Welcoming Schools
www.welcomingschools.org/

The School Counselor and Gifted and Talented Student Programs

(Adopted 1988; revised 1993, 1999, 2001, 2007, 2013, 2019)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The school counselor delivers a school counseling program to meet students' academic, career and social/emotional needs. 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 other educators and stakeholders.

The Rationale

Research suggests gifted and talented students may share common personality characteristics, such as perfectionism, sensitivity and idealism (Mammadov, Cross & Ward, 2018). Within the school counseling program, school counselors create an environment in which the academic, career and social/emotional development of all students, including gifted and talented students, is fostered (Kennedy & Farley, 2018).

Purposeful gifted and talented education programs include several benefits: assisting the gifted student in college and career goals, defining postsecondary and career plans and increasing achievement levels. (Colangelo, Assouline & Gross, 2004; Delcourt, 1993; Hébert, 1993; Taylor, 1992). School counselors consider these needs when implementing developmentally appropriate activities as a part of a school counseling program (ASCA, 2019).

Research also suggests that ongoing exposure to micro-aggressions directed at marginalized students creates an environment where students fear the label of gifted and talented (Staumbaugh & Ford, 2014). The issue of overrepresentation of Asian and white students in gifted education programs was described in a data collection from the Office of Civil Rights (OCR). The data reveals American Indian, Hispanic and African American student groups have been underrepresented in elementary and secondary school gifted education programs since 1978 (US OCR, 2004).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors 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.

School counselors 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. School counselors assist in promoting understanding and awareness of the unique issues that may both positively and negatively affect gifted and talented students including:

- accelerated learning
- advocacy for access to rigorous and appropriately challenging programs
- meeting expectations
- perfectionism
- stress management
- depression
- anxiety
- underachievement
- dropping out
- delinquency
- difficulty in peer relationships
- twice exceptional (e.g., identified as gifted and talented and an identified disability; Foley Nicpon & Cederberg, 2015)
- advanced talent in various fields
- intellectual abilities
- high-achieving outcomes

School counselors provide individual and group counseling for gifted and talented students as needed and serve as a resource for gifted and talented students and their families in meeting the students' needs. School counselors are aware of students who are gifted and culturally diverse. Consequently, school counselors seek to identify marginalized students, students of color, English-language learners and first-generation students in order for them to have the most academically aligned experience (Mitcham-Smith, 2007). School counselors are prepared to address the needs of culturally diverse students in a holistic manner to incorporate effective and relevant strategies for students' success. School counselors also seek to 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.

Summary

School counselors deliver a school counseling program to meet students' academic, career and social/emotional needs. Students identified as gifted and talented have unique developmental needs and special abilities, which are considered when implementing a school counseling program. Specifically planned educational experiences can greatly enhance the continued development of gifted and talented students (Sohailat, Soua'd & Mouhamed, 2013). 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 Group Counseling

(Adopted 1989; revised 1993, 2002, 2008; reviewed 1999, 2008, 2014, 2020)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Group counseling is a vital direct service to students and is an effective part of a school counseling program. It has a positive effect on academic, career and social/emotional development and should be 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. Group counseling has been shown to be effective in improving study skills (Kayler & Sherman, 2018), underachievement (Berger, 2018) and school adjustment (Steen, Liu, Shi, Rose, & Merino, 2018). Group counseling can help reduce social isolation and negative emotions, as well as increase positive peer relations and a sense of belonging. In group counseling, affect, cognition and behavior are emphasized. The group creates a climate of trust, caring, understanding and support that enables students to share their concerns with peers and the school counselor. Group work in schools represents an integral domain in the ASCA National Model (Erford, 2019; ASCA, 2019).

The School Counselor's Role

The school counselor's training in group facilitation is unique to the school setting. School counselors provide group counseling services to students and utilize their specialized training to educate and inform school staff and administration on relevant professional group issues or topics. Group counseling services are based on individual student, school and community needs, which are assessed through student data, a referral process or other relevant data.

School counselors prioritize group offerings based on school data analysis. Group counseling should be available to all students in a pre-K–12 setting using data to inform decisions about group availability. 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/guardian consent and student agreement to participate (Falco 2011).

School counselors provide counseling sessions in 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, goal-focused, evidenced-based and 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 instruction that enhances awareness of mental health and short-term intervention to include small-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, 2019) and maintain collaborative relationships with providers to align service coordination.

Summary

Group counseling is an efficient and effective way to meet students' academic, career and social/emotional 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 school counseling program and should be 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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The School Counselor and High-Stakes Testing

(Adopted 2002, Revised 2007, 2014, 2017)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors recognize that standardized test results are one of many measures that can be used to assess student learning and performance across standards. School counselors advocate for the use of multiple criteria when educational decisions such as course enrollment and admissions are made about student performance and oppose the use of a single test to make important educational decisions affecting students, teachers and schools.

The Rationale

High-stakes testing, which refers to the use of standardized test scores to make important decisions about students, schools and districts, was a prominent part of the No Child Left Behind Act passed in 2001 (NCLB, 2002). High-stakes test results have been used as a method to determine a student's: academic placement, promotion and retention, graduation and intervention services. Other decisions made using standardized test results for schools and districts include:

- increased or reduced funding at the state or local level
- revision of curriculum
- revision of teacher certification standards
- appropriate accommodations for students with exceptional learning needs and English-language learners
- decisions about school closings
- evaluation of instructional personnel

When high-stakes assessments are used in this manner, they have a direct and significant effect on the academic future of the student being assessed and, increasingly, on the teacher's career and reputation and the school's status in the community, as well as access to local, state and federal school funding (Duffy, Giordano, Farrell, Paneque, & Crump, 2008). When results from standardized tests are the only factors used to make educational decisions, these decisions may not be fully informed and could lead to biased decision-making. It is important to consider all factors that can provide additional information related to student achievement.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), enacted in 2015, represents a legislative move toward identifying multiple measures to assess student success. The act encourages an approach to testing that moves away from a sole focus on standardized tests to drive decisions around the quality of schools to multiple measures of student learning and progress, including other indicators of student success to make school accountability decisions (White House, 2015). School counselors continue to advocate for reasonable use of multiple measures to assess student achievement and determine need for school improvement at the local and state levels.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors recognize that standardized test results provide valuable information related to student achievement. However, school counselors also understand that some students struggle with standardized test practices that prevent these tests from providing an accurate reflection of their capabilities. Additionally, school counselors recognize that standardized tests only provide a partial picture of student learning. When important educational decisions are made, school counselors advocate for the use of multiple criteria in the decision-making process. These criteria may include but are not limited to:

- Standardized tests results
- Teacher input
- Portfolios
- Projects
- Work samples
- Classroom performance
- Recommendation letters
- Personal statement
- Student access to curriculum and courses

School counselors support the school's educational initiatives by organizing and implementing a school counseling program aligned with the school's academic mission and providing support to students, teachers and administrators by:

- Monitoring student achievement data and achievement-related data (e.g., grades, attendance, school engagement, discipline referrals, retention rates, SAT/ACT)
- Disaggregating data to inform instruction and strengthen curriculum
- Providing support to teachers through collaboration and teaming
- Providing direct student services in the areas of study skills, test-taking skills, stress reduction and test anxiety among other topics
- Working with administrators on home-school communication to aid in maintaining a healthy school and classroom assessment environment (Cizek & Burg, 2006)
- Advocating to postsecondary institutions that students should be considered holistically throughout the admissions process

School counselors recognize some of the unintended consequences as a result of mandated, high-stakes assessments include: a redirection of time and resources away from innovative, creative learning programs and school counseling programs toward strict emphasis on basic skills (McReynolds, 2006); the belief that student achievement is best measured by a standardized assessment as compared with multiple and culturally contextual criteria; and student and family anxiety and stress, as well as educator stress and burnout (Duffy et al., 2008). In collaboration with other educators, school counselors also advocate for:

- appropriate testing conditions and administration of standardized tests with solid psychometric properties
- opportunities to retake a test when a student is unsuccessful in one administration
- opportunities to take comparable tests when a student is unsuccessful in one administration
- the use of standardized tests norm-referenced with representative student populations
- discontinuation of standardized tests that show socioeconomic or cultural bias

The school counselor's role should not include clerical or administrative activities that take the school counselor away from implementing a school counseling program (i.e., test coordination or monitoring make-up tests). Research has shown that serving in these capacities is not compatible with the school counselor's role and prevents the school counselor from having a positive impact on student achievement, school climate and the school's academic mission directly (Mullen & Lambie, 2016). When these roles are inappropriately assigned, school counselors should employ advocacy skills (e.g., outlining the distribution of time in the school counselor/administrator annual administrative conference) to respectfully help administrators understand that school counselors' time should be invested in working with students and staff on issues such as test-taking skills, time-management skills and stress management within the framework of a school counseling program.

Summary

School counselors work with staff and students in implementing strategies that support students in the test-taking process. School counselors recognize the use of standardized test results as one of many measures of student achievement and success. School counselors reject the use of high-stakes tests or the use of any other single measurement instrument as the only indicator of student success. The school counselor encourages multiple measures when life-influencing decisions are being made.

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The School Counselor and the Identification, Prevention and Intervention of Harmful or Disadvantageous Behaviors

(Adopted 1989-90; revised 1993, 1999, 2004, 2011, 2017, 2023)

ASCA Position

School counselors design and implement comprehensive school counseling programs that include processes for identifying students who may be engaging in harmful or disadvantageous behaviors. As part of that program, school counselors provide developmentally appropriate, culturally sensitive interventions and supports to assess the unmet need or lagging skill behind those behaviors and to promote the mindsets and behaviors all students need for success now and in the future.

The Rationale

All schools and communities have students who could potentially drop out of school and/or engage in disadvantageous behaviors, such as absenteeism, performing below their potential academically, substance abuse, bullying, cyberbullying, suicidal ideation, physical violence, or engaging in self-harm and other destructive or dangerous behaviors. Additionally, schools and communities may have policy, environmental or resource issues that leave students vulnerable to disadvantageous behavior (Holcomb-McCoy, 2022). These behaviors may have lifelong implications and often stem from social/ emotional concerns, including low self-esteem, identity issues, family and relationship problems, grief, trauma, neglect, abuse and/or substance use.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors develop school counseling programs designed to prevent harmful behaviors while also taking proactive leadership to identify and intervene with students who demonstrate these behaviors. School counselors advocate for systemic, trauma-informed and culturally inclusive, school-based means of identification, multitiered interventions and, when necessary, behavioral and mental health referrals to school, district and/or community supports.

Using data to develop and assess preventive and responsive services to address these risks is an integral part of a school counseling program. School counselors collaborate with staff, school teams, other students, families, and the community to identify students participating in harmful behaviors and intervene with these students to limit or eliminate the risk of harm or negative consequences.

Taking a leadership role in promoting student success, school counselors:

- Provide preventive schoolwide initiatives and classroom lessons to increase student knowledge and awareness of the dangers of harmful behaviors, as well as to cultivate mindsets and behaviors promoting student success, including learning strategies, self-management skills and social skills
- Provide multitiered intervention services, including Tier 1 classroom lessons and Tier 2 short-term counseling in individual or group settings
- Collaborate and consult with families to increase involvement, including referring students and families to support services and community agencies
- Recognize the limits of confidentiality and the inherent parent/guardian/caregiver's legal and inherent rights to be the guiding force in their child's life as indicated in sections A.2.f & A.2.g of the *ASCA Ethical Standards* (2022)
- Work to reduce the stigma of mental health and reinforce help-seeking behavior
- Implement trauma-informed practices that may help staff utilize appropriate interventions while maintaining sensitivity to students (Haviland, 2017)
- Collaborate with school administration and community members to identify and assist students in crisis
- Enhance social support by using an ecological and multicultural approach to understanding the sociocultural factors at work in their communities
- Conduct staff development for school and district staff on prevention and intervention of harmful behaviors
- Advocate for change in policies and procedures that are not culturally responsive and/or perpetuate inequities
- Advocate for changes in the school and community that promote well-being, success and equitable access to resources

Summary

School counselors design and implement school counseling programs that prevent harmful behaviors, while also taking proactive leadership to identify and intervene with students who demonstrate these behaviors. As a part of this program, school counselors collaborate with other educators and stakeholders to provide prevention, early identification, and trauma-informed interventions for all students to minimize or eliminate harmful and disadvantageous behaviors.

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The School Counselor and Individual Student Planning for Postsecondary Preparation

(Adopted 1994, Revised 2000, 2006, 2012, 2013, 2017)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors recognize that each student possesses unique interests, abilities and goals, which will lead to various future life and career opportunities. Collaborating with students, families, educational staff and the community, the school counselor works to ensure all students develop an academic and career plan reflecting their interests, abilities and goals and including rigorous, relevant coursework and experiences appropriate for the student.

Rationale

Academic and college/career planning provides all students with the opportunity to identify strengths, areas in need of improvement and areas of interest early in their education, so students and their families can set postsecondary goals and make informed choices to support students in achieving their desired goals (Conley, 2013; Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014). The focus of academic and career planning is threefold: to help students acquire the skills to achieve academic success, to make connections between school and life experiences and to acquire knowledge and skills to be college and/or career ready upon high school graduation. According to Savitz-Romer and Bouffary (2013), academic and career planning includes supporting a variety of developmental processes (e.g., self-concept, motivation, goal setting, self-regulation, identity development and relationship development).

ASCA recognizes college and career readiness begins as early as preschool or kindergarten, is exemplified by students who are prepared for any postsecondary experience without the need for remediation and ensures all students possess the attitudes, skills and knowledge needed to qualify for and succeed in their chosen field.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors understand national, state and local requirements and programs that may affect future opportunities for college and career readiness and therefore play a critical role in academic and career planning. The school counselor takes a proactive role in assisting students, families and staff as they assess student strengths and interests and encourage the selection of a rigorous and relevant educational program supporting all students' college and career goals. School counselors provide all students the opportunity to:

- Demonstrate skills needed for school success
- Demonstrate the connection between coursework and life experiences
- Make course selections that allow them the opportunity to choose from a wide range of postsecondary options
- Explore interests and abilities in relation to knowledge of self and the world of work
- Identify and apply strategies to achieve future academic and career success
- Demonstrate the skills for successful goal setting and attainment
- Develop a portfolio to highlight strengths and interests

Summary

School counselors collaborate with administrators, teachers, staff, families and the communities to ensure all students have the opportunity to design a rigorous and relevant academic and career program preparing them to be college and career ready. School counselors design and implement a school counseling program that includes educational and career planning activities for all students designed to assist students in reaching academic, career and social/emotional goals.

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The School Counselor and Letters of Recommendation

(Adopted 2020)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors work ethically when writing letters of recommendation for students. To guide their work, school counselors rely on the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016) and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA; 1974), which is a federal statute protecting parents' and students' rights regarding educational records (Stone, 2014).

The Rationale

In their role as student advocates, school counselors use best practices to help all students achieve their aspirations. They recognize that letters of recommendation play a significant role in admissions decisions; notably, they are the third most-used predictor of college success following the GPA and test scores (Kuncel, Kochevar & Ones, 2014). In addition, it has been found that often “the letters are used not only to determine admissibility, but also to determine eligibility for scholarships and honors invitations” (Akos and Kretchmar, 2016, p. 102).

School counselors help students and their families understand the value of letters of recommendation and the positive impact these letters can provide all students in the postsecondary planning process. School counselors are familiar with inequities in higher education such as wealthier families enrolling their students in college at higher rates than lower-income families, particularly in highly selective institutions (Harris, 2019). Also noted by the National Center for Education Statistics, “The percentage of the lowest SES students who were neither enrolled [in postsecondary education] nor employed was roughly five times as large as the corresponding percentage for the highest SES students” (NCES, 2019, para. 5). In recognition of the disparities that exist in admission to postsecondary institutions and employment opportunities by race, ethnicity and geography (Brainerd, 2017), school counselors work to mitigate the impact of injustice and inequity and support all students in achieving their goals beyond high school.

The School Counselor's Role

When requested by students to write letters of recommendation, school counselors must balance their support for students by using a strengths-based approach (beneficence) while maintaining honest, conscientious communication without harm to students (nonmaleficence). Additionally, as school leaders and advocates, school counselors help school staff, students, and their families understand the legal and ethical practices having an impact on letters of recommendation as well as the role these letters play in admission processes and future employment opportunities.

School counselors understand that offering to provide letters of recommendation cannot be made conditional on waiving ones' rights afforded them under FERPA (Family Policy Compliance Office [FPCO], 2005). They also understand that an educational agency or institution may not require parents or students to waive the protections and rights afforded them under FERPA (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) as a condition for acceptance into an institution or receipt of educational services.

In regard to letters of recommendation, school counselors:

- Maintain familiarity of federal and state laws and local school board policies concerning personal identifiable information
- Include personal identifiable information only with dated, written consent of student and/or parents/guardians
- Educate students and their families on the impact of waiving rights to view recommendations sent to potential postsecondary institutions and/or employers
- Advise students on appropriate content for admissions applications
- Provide teachers and administrators with training, orientation and consultation about considerations in writing letters of recommendation (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2012)
- Promote ethical administration of standardized exams and reporting of test scores and other records
- Consider implications of releasing disciplinary records as a part of a final transcript
- Work to gather ample information before writing a letter of recommendation about a student they do not know well
- Do not sign letters of recommendation they have not written

Summary

There are many legal and ethical implications associated with writing letters of recommendation for students. School counselors are aware of these implications, apply them in their practice and communicate them to students, their families and educators to best support students as they seek employment and postsecondary opportunities.

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The School Counselor and LGBTQ+ Youth

(Adopted 1995; Revised 2000, 2005, 2007, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2022)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors promote equal opportunity and respect for students regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. School counselors recognize the school experience can be significantly more difficult for students with marginalized identities. School counselors work to eliminate barriers impeding LGBTQ+ student development and achievement.

The Rationale

Despite widespread efforts, LGBTQ+ students continue to face challenges that threaten their academic and social/emotional development in schools. Students report feeling unsafe in school due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression and report experiencing homophobic remarks, harassment and bullying (Kosciw et al., 2020). LGBTQ+ individuals often face multiple risk factors that may place them at greater risk for suicidal behavior (Johns et al., 2020).

School counselors realize these issues affect healthy student development and psychological well-being and advocate for conditions protecting LGBTQ+ youth. Students report lower levels of verbal and physical harassment when they have a supportive adult in school, participate in inclusive curriculum and have delineated policies protecting students from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression (Kosciw et al., 2020).

The School Counselor's Role

The school counselor works with all students through the stages of identity development and understands this may be more difficult for LGBTQ+ youth. It is not the school counselor's role to attempt to change a student's sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. School counselors recognize the profound harm intrinsic to therapies alleging to change an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity (Ryan et al., 2020) and advocate to protect LGBTQ+ students from this harm. School counselors provide support to LGBTQ+ students to promote academic achievement and social/emotional development. School counselors are committed to the affirmation of all youth regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression and work to create safe and affirming schools. School counselors:

- Counsel students with questions about their sexual orientation and gender identity as well as students' feelings about the identity of others in an accepting and nonjudgmental manner
- Advocate for equitable educational and extracurricular opportunities for all students regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression (ASCA, 2019)
- Advocate for transgender, nonbinary and gender-expansive students regarding access of building facilities (e.g., ensuring a safe environment for restroom use and changing) and gender presentation (e.g., wearing a dress or pants for an orchestra or vocal performance)
- Understand the intersections of students' sexual, gender and racial identities and the additional victimization experienced by LGBTQ+ students of color (Kosciw et al., 2020) and the need for cultural competence when working with them and their families (Craig et al., 2018)
- Promote policies that effectively reduce the use of offensive language, harassment and bullying and improve school climate
- Address absenteeism, lowered educational aspirations and academic achievement, and low psychological well-being as a result of victimization and feeling unsafe at school (Kosciw et al., 2020)
- Provide a safe space for LGBTQ+ students and allies such as Genders and Sexualities Alliance Clubs
- Promote sensitivity and acceptance of diversity among all students and staff to include LGBTQ+ students and diverse family systems
- Advocate for the rights of families to access and participate in their student's education and school activities without discrimination (GLSEN, 2021)
- Support an inclusive curriculum at all grade levels (Simons et al., 2018)
- Model language that is inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity
- Advocate for adoption of school policies addressing discrimination and promoting violence-prevention programs to create a safe and supportive school environment (Gower et al., 2017)

- Support students in addressing possible discrimination by staff members (ASCA, 2019)
- Engage in training on supporting LGBTQ+ students and advocating for their rights in schools (Beck & Wikoff, 2020; Gonzalez, 2017; Kull et al., 2017; Simons et al., 2017)
- Encourage staff training on inclusive practices, an affirming school environment, accurate information and risk factors for LGBTQ+ students (Dragowski et al., 2016)
- Know the impact of family acceptance on student well-being and ability to thrive (Craig et al., 2018; Roe, 2017; Ryan et al., 2020)
- Support families whose children are coming out by helping them navigate these important developmental milestones in ways that protect LGBTQ+ students from harm and help families stay together (Ryan et al., 2020)
- Identify LGBTQ+ community resources for students and families and assess the quality and inclusiveness of these resources before referring to such resources

Summary

School counselors promote affirmation, respect, and equal opportunity for all students regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. School counselors promote awareness of and education on issues related to LGBTQ+ students and encourage a safe and affirming school environment. School counselors work to eliminate barriers impeding student development and achievement and are committed to all students' academic, career and social/emotional development.

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The School Counselor and Military-Connected Students

(Adopted, 2023)

ASCA Position

School counselors recognize military-connected students' unique and diverse needs. To support military-connected students, school counselors design and implement school counseling programs that promote an inclusive school climate, include activities and services supporting their distinct challenges and build school-family-community partnerships that create a sense of connectedness and belonging.

The Rationale

There are approximately four million military-connected students in the United States (Military Child Education Coalition, 2013; Elias, 2016). This number includes students who have parents/guardians who are either active duty, Reserves, National Guard or prior service members. Furthermore, 80% of all military-connected students attend public schools (Elias, 2016). Due to the transient nature of military service, many military families experience frequent changes and transitions, including parental deployment, relocation, familial separation and adjustment to civilian life (Cole, 2016; Ward, 2018). While such transitions can cultivate resilience, strength, and cultural awareness among military-connected students (Cole & Cowan, 2021), they can also produce stress and adversely affect their academic achievement, career readiness, and social/emotional development. When school counselors are aware of the military culture and military-connected students' specific needs, they can facilitate a comprehensive school counseling program that fosters an inclusive learning environment and aids in all students' success (Quintana & Cole, 2021; Ward, 2018).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors are uniquely positioned to support military-connected students' academic, career, and social/emotional development (Quintana & Cole, 2021). School counselors provide instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling to directly support success for military-connected students. Through indirect student services, school counselors collaborate with students, their families, and school and community partners to increase educational success and access (ASCA, 2019). More specifically, school counselors:

- Recognize and identify distinct challenges faced by military-connected students and help mitigate their impact on students' academic, career and social/emotional development (Cole, 2016; Ruff & Keim, 2014; Ward, 2018)
- Understand the intersections of students' identities, including military culture (e.g., language, customs, etc.), and the need for culturally responsive and sustaining practices when working with military-connected students and their families (ASCA, 2022; Cole, 2014)
- Promote an inclusive school climate that includes school-family-community partnerships, connectedness and a sense of belonging for military-connected students (James, 2017; Quintana & Cole, 2021)
- Identify and provide resources for military-connected students and families, especially during unique periods such as relocations, deployments and military separation (Cole, 2016; Ward, 2018)
- Provide goal-focused, evidenced-based, short-term group and individual counseling services to address military-connected students' social/emotional needs (ASCA, 2020; Ward, 2018)
- Support the postsecondary readiness needs of military-connected students through various college- and career-focused activities (e.g., postsecondary action plans, SAT/ACT preparation, career inventories, financial aid planning, identification of gaps in college/career access, college/career advisement, etc.) (College Board, 2010; Quintana & Cole, 2021)
- Use data-informed approaches to identify academic needs and support remediation efforts for military-connected students experiencing learning loss/gaps due to transitional experiences (ASCA, 2019)
- Collaborate with military families when referring students to appropriate support services and community organizations (ASCA, 2019; Ward, 2018)
- Advocate for school policies that increase awareness, knowledge, support, and success when working with military-connected students (e.g., Military Student Identifier, Military Interstate Compact, etc.; James, 2017; Quintana & Cole, 2021)

- Consult and collaborate with installation and community partners (e.g., school liaison officer, Exceptional Family Member Program, Family Advocacy Program, etc.) to promote military-connected students' educational success (Quintana, 2021)
- Engage in and promote professional development opportunities to support military-connected students and advocate for their diverse, unique needs in schools (Quintana & Cole, 2021)

Summary

School counselors have an integral role in ensuring military-connected students feel a sense of belonging and connectedness. Effectively meeting military-connected students' needs, school counselors engage in collaborative efforts to establish a comprehensive school counseling program that is an inclusive and culturally responsive and fosters military-connected students' academic, career, and social/emotional development.

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- Military Kids Connect: <https://militarykidsconnect.health.mil/>
- Military One Source: www.militaryonesource.com
- Military Child Education Coalition: www.militarychild.org
- Operation Military Kids: www.operationmilitarykids.org
- Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3): www.mic3.net
- Department of Defense Education Activity: www.dodea.edu/index.cfm
- Tutor.com: www.tutor.com
- DoD School Liaison Officer (Local Installation)
- Military and Government Counseling Association (MGCA): <http://mgcaonline.org/about-us>
- National Military Family Association: www.militaryfamily.org/
- Military Families United: www.militaryfamiliesunited.org/
- United Service Organization (USO): www.uso.org/

The School Counselor and Multitiered System of Supports

(Adopted 2008, revised 2014, 2018, revised 2021)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors are stakeholders in the development and implementation of multitiered system of supports (MTSS), including, but not limited to, response to intervention and responsive positive behavioral interventions and supports. School counselors align their work with MTSS through the implementation of a school counseling program designed to affect student development in the academic (achievement), career (career exploration and development) and social/emotional (behavior) domains.

The Rationale

MTSS is a culturally sustaining, evidence-based framework implemented in pre-K–12 schools using data-based problem-solving to integrate academic and behavioral instruction and intervention at tiered intensities to improve the learning and social/emotional functioning of all students (Sink, 2016). Guided by student-centered data, MTSS teams engage in cyclical data-based problem solving; make informed decisions about general, compensatory and special education; and assist in the creation of a well-integrated and seamless system of instruction and intervention (Ehren, Montgomery, Rudebush, & Whitmire, 2006).

Within the framework of a data-informed school counseling program, school counselors augment their collaboration, coordination and leadership skills (Shepard et al., 2013) to meet the needs of all students and identify students who are at risk for not meeting academic and behavioral expectations. School counselors collaborate across student service disciplines with teachers, administrators and families to design and implement plans to address student needs and to promote students' academic, career and social/emotional success (ASCA, 2019). Data is collected and analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the learning supports for continual improvement efforts over time.

MTSS offers school counselors opportunities to have a lasting impact on student academic success and behavior development while integrating the framework within a school counseling program (Ziomek-Daigle, Goodman-Scott & Donohue, 2016). The application of MTSS aligns with the role of school counseling at any grade level and can be used across the academic, college/career and/or social/emotional domains established in the ASCA National Model (Goodman-Scott et al., 2020).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors enhance student academic, career and social/emotional development through the implementation of a school counseling program based on the ASCA National Model (2019). Through these programs, school counselors align with the school's MTSS by:

- providing all students with standards-based school counseling instruction to address universal academic, career and social/emotional development
- analyzing academic, career and social/emotional development data to identify students who need support
- identifying and collaborating on research-based intervention strategies implemented by school staff
- evaluating academic and behavioral progress after interventions
- revising interventions as appropriate
- referring to school and community services as appropriate
- collaborating with administrators, teachers, other school professionals, community agencies and families in MTSS design and implementation
- advocating for equitable education for all students and working to remove systemic barriers

School counselors align their school counseling program with MTSS by providing direct and indirect student services including:

- Tier 1 interventions in the form of classroom instruction and schoolwide programming and initiatives
- Tier 2 interventions including small-group and individual counseling, consultation and collaboration with school personnel, families and community stakeholders
- Tier 3 indirect student support services through consultation, collaboration and facilitation of referrals (Goodman-Scott, et al., 2020).

Additionally, school counselors provide Tier 1 services by emphasizing the use of data and collaboration (Betters-Bubon et al., 2016; Betters-Bubon & Donohue, 2016; Goodman-Scott et al., 2016) and engage in evidence-based prevention work (Goodman-Scott et al., 2014). In Tier 2, school counselors provide direct services such as targeted group counseling (Sherrod et al., 2009) and individualized interventions (e.g., check in, check out; Dart et al., 2012) (Goodman-Scott, et al., 2020). In Tier 3, typically school counselors only provide indirect services as supporters through consultation, collaboration and facilitation of referrals as members of the MTSS team (Goodman-Scott, et al., 2020).

School counselors collaboratively support the process of MTSS universal screening for mental health (Donohue et al., 2016), academic and behavioral supports. The school counselor may also provide indirect student service by presenting data or serving as a consultant to a student support team. The school counselor engages as part of the leadership team in MTSS but “should not be the sole leader of MTSS in our buildings” (Goodman-Scott, et al., 2020, p. 33).

Summary

School counselors implement school counseling programs addressing the needs of all students. Guided by review of student data, school counselors deliver instruction, appraisal and advisement to students in Tier 1 and 2 and collaborate with other specialist instructional support personnel, educators and families to provide appropriate instruction and learning supports for students in Tier 2 within the school’s MTSS program. School counselors also work collaboratively with other educators to remove systemic barriers for all students and implement specific learning supports that assist in academic and behavioral success.

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The School Counselor and Peer Support Programs

(Adopted 1978; Revised 1984, 1993, 1999, 2002, 2008, 2015, 2021)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Peer support programs help students develop an improved sense of well-being, social confidence and health behaviors (Curren & Wexler, 2016). The informed implementation of peer support programs enhances the effectiveness of school counseling programs and provides increased outreach and expansion of services.

The Rationale

Development of relational peer networks in schools can improve students' academic achievement and social supports (Williams et al., 2018). Specifically, peer support programs can be defined as peer-to-peer interaction in which individuals who are of approximately the same age take on a helping role, assisting students who may share related values, experiences and lifestyles. Peer support programs include activities such as assistance in one-to-one and group settings, academic/educational help, new student aid and other diverse activities of an interpersonal helping nature.

School counselors are aware that students often communicate more readily to peers than adults. Peer support programs can enhance the effectiveness of school counseling programs by increasing outreach and raising student awareness of services. Through proper selection, training and supervision, peer support can be a positive influence within the school and community. Research indicates peer support programs are helpful when focused on assisting students with social/emotional or academic problems and disabilities (Logsdon, et al., 2018), while promoting protective factors (e.g., developmental assets determined by the Search Institute). Peer support programs can also help create a positive school culture and connectedness to the school community for both mentors and mentees (Voight & Nation, 2016) as well as safer schools (Walker, 2019).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors are responsible for determining the needs of the school population and for implementing interventions designed to meet those needs, such as peer support programs. In collaboration with school staff, school counselors:

- follow the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors as they relate to peer support programs, including safeguarding the welfare of students participating in peer support programs and providing appropriate training and supervision for peer helpers (ASCA, 2016; QPR, 2019)
- use best practices when developing and implementing peer support programs (Berger, et al., 2018)
- create a selection plan for peer helpers reflecting the diversity of the population to be served
- develop a support system for the program that communicates the program's goals and purpose through positive public relations
- monitor, assess and adjust the program and training on a continual basis to meet the assessed needs of the school population the program serves
- report results to all school stakeholders (e.g., students, teachers, administrators, parents, community)

Summary

School counselors understand and build upon the positive effects of peer support programs on students, the school climate and culture, as well as the school connectedness of students involved. School counselors also understand their unique responsibilities when peer-support programs are implemented, including ensuring students are properly trained, supervised and supported in their role.

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The School Counselor and Prevention of School-Related Gun Violence

(Adopted 2018; revised 2019)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors collaborate with school staff and the community to ensure students attend schools where the environment is conducive to teaching and learning. To support the work of school counselors and school staff, schools and communities should be free from gun violence and threats. School counselors support safe schools and are responsive in crises as emphasized in the *Safe Schools and Crisis Response* (2019) position statement.

The Rationale

Gun violence is the leading cause of premature death in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018) reported that an average of seven children and teens are killed with guns in the United States every day. The Interdisciplinary Group on Preventing School and Community Violence in a Call for Action to Prevent Gun Violence in the United States of America (2018) outlined three levels of prevention. Those recommendations related to school counseling include:

- **Level 1.** Universal approaches promoting safety and well-being, including requirement for all schools to assess school climate and maintain physically and emotionally safe conditions and positive school environments that protect all students and adults from bullying, discrimination, harassment, and assault (e.g., Donohue, Goodman-Scott, & Betters-Bubon, 2015).
- **Level 2.** Practices for reducing risk and promoting protective factors for persons experiencing difficulties, including adequate staffing of school counselors, psychologists, and social workers to provide coordinated school- and community-based mental health services for individuals with risk factors for violence, recognizing violence is not intrinsically a product of mental illness (e.g., Levine & Tamburrino, 2014); and reformation of school discipline policies to reduce exclusionary practices and foster positive social, behavioral, emotional and academic success for students (e.g., Goodman-Scott, Betters-Bubon & Donohue, 2015).
- **Level 3.** Interventions for individuals where violence is present or appears imminent, including training and maintaining school- and community-based threat assessment teams that include mental health and law enforcement partners with channels of communication for persons to report potential threats as well as interventions to resolve conflicts and assist troubled individuals (e.g., Helgeson & Schneider, 2015).

Research has shown that positive school climate is tied to high or improving attendance rates, test scores, promotion rates and graduation rates. Conversely, negative school climate can harm students and raise liability issues for schools and districts. Negative school climate is linked to lower student achievement and graduation rates, and it creates opportunities for violence, bullying and even suicide (NCSSL, 2018). Research on the increasing trend calling for armed school personnel has demonstrated that armed personnel may create a negative school climate (Rajan & Branas, 2018; Swartz, Osborne, Dawson-Edwards, & Higgins, 2016; Weiler & Armenta, 2014).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors are educational leaders and advocates of safe-school initiatives and are a vital resource in the creation, development and implementation of best-practice strategies designed to improve school climate fostering engagement, support, and acceptance of all students (MacNeil, Prater & Busch, 2009). Consequently, school counselors should advocate for school counseling programs fostering all students' social/emotional and academic well-being. According to Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen and Pollitt (2013), school counselors support a comprehensive approach to safe schools by:

- supporting proactive principal leadership
- allowing school leaders to deploy human and financial resources in a manner that best meets school and community needs
- providing a team-based framework to facilitate effective coordination of services and interventions
- balancing the needs for physical and psychological safety
- employing the necessary and appropriately trained school-employed mental health and safety personnel
- providing relevant and ongoing professional development for all staff
- integrating a continuum of mental health supports within a multitiered systems of support
- engaging families and community providers as meaningful partners
- remaining grounded in teaching and learning (the mission and purpose of schools)

ASCA joins more than 75 national education, medical, health, public health and research organizations in a call to action to address the epidemic of gun violence in our communities. All school counselors are encouraged to advocate for recommendations adopted by other national organizations representing education stakeholders and the safety of all students. Additionally, school counselors are encouraged to advocate for implementation of the following recommendations at the federal level rather than state-by-state in an effort to prevent interstate gun sales and transport:

- Support a ban on military-style weapons, high-capacity ammunition clips and products that modify semi-automatic firearms to enable them to function like automatic firearms
- Support closing loopholes for gun purchases at gun shows and online
- Support requirements for thorough background checks for all gun purchases and strengthen background check criteria to prevent purchases by high-risk individuals
- Oppose any efforts to arm educators (including teachers, school counselors and administrators)

Summary

Through the implementation of a school counseling program, school counselors promote school safety through advocacy efforts. Advocating for schools that are free from gun violence and threats can assist school counselors in supporting safe schools.

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The School Counselor and Prevention of Sexually Transmitted Infections

(Adopted 1988; revised 1993, 1999, 2001, 2006, 2012, 2018)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The school counselor supports educational efforts related to the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), through engagement with students, families, school staff and the community to prevent infection and the spread of these infections. The school counselor collaborates with other school health personnel in these efforts, while recognizing the importance of student/family confidentiality. The school counselor provides support, counseling and referral services to students and their families affected by these infections.

The Rationale

Current research suggests that formal sex education addressing topics such as the prevention of STIs has been in decline since 2011 (Lindberg, Maddow-Zimet, & Boonstra, 2016); yet, we know that lack of information about STIs may put adolescents' health at risk as they explore multiple facets of their identities. As a part of a student support services team, school counselors have the opportunity and responsibility to provide students with developmentally appropriate, accurate and current health information regarding STIs and to help them develop healthy attitudes and habits. Risk can be reduced when adolescents understand the causes and potential consequences of sexual behaviors and experimentation and learn multiple ways to prevent acquiring and spreading of STIs (Chin et al., 2012). School counselors are poised within the schools to provide this education and prevention information to students and their families. Students and families affected by STIs have a right to confidentiality and equitable treatment in schools (ASCA, 2016).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors collaborate with school health personnel (e.g., school nurse, health instructors, physical education instructors and life science instructors) to provide counseling, support and educational programs for students, staff and families. As a part of the school counseling program, the school counselor addresses STIs not as a moral issue but through prevention and nonbiased support efforts. The school counselor strives through professional development to maintain a current understanding of the recommendations and resources regarding the nature of STIs 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 (2016) regarding STIs. The school counselor understands and upholds HIPAA and FERPA laws protecting confidentiality of students and families affected by STIs. The school counselor is alert to any form of discrimination on the basis of a student's STI status. The school counselor advocates on behalf of students and families affected by STIs for equity and access to educational opportunities and health care, maintenance of confidentiality and referrals to available resources to assist them.

As a part of the school counseling program, the school counselor is an advocate and direct service provider for the implementation of an STI education curriculum in collaboration with the school's other health curriculum providers. The STI education curriculum includes instruction for students, families and staff promoting healthy living and responsibility to self, family and society. Preventive education is recommended for populations currently less likely to receive adequate STI education: males (Donaldson, Lindberg, Ellen, & Marcell, 2013), rural students (Lindberg et al., 2016) and LGBTQ groups (Gowen & Winges-Yanez, 2014).

Specific elements may include general information about STIs, including knowledge of:

- behaviors that put people at risk
- methods of transmission
- health risks to self and others
- related nondiscrimination and confidentiality policies
- prevention efforts
- accurate information dispelling myths and stereotypes
- referral information for health clinics providing testing and treatment

Summary

The school counselor promotes educational efforts related to STIs while providing support and counseling to students and families affected by these infections. The school counselor's approach to STI-related issues is through education and prevention efforts, by keeping abreast of current recommendations and resources in collaboration with health care professionals in the school and community.

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Resources

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

Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA): <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/reg/ferpa/index.html>

Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN):
<https://www.glsen.org/article/call-action-youth-parents-community-members-educators-and-policymakers>

Guttmacher Institute State Laws and Policies: <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/laws-policies>

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/resources/>

Sexually Transmitted Diseases – Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/std/prevention/default.htm>

The School Counselor and Retention, Social Promotion and Age-Appropriate Placement

(Adopted 2006, revised 2012, 2017, 2023)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors recognize that decisions on student retention, promotion and placement are best made when the student's needs are at the forefront of the decision and after considering multiple factors. School counselors also recognize that retention and social promotion decisions have a disproportionate impact on students from culturally, linguistically and otherwise diverse backgrounds. School counselors oppose laws or policies requiring social promotion or retention and advocate for laws and policies that consider individual student needs regarding age-appropriate placement.

The Rationale

The evidence about the academic benefits of grade retention is mixed, but the effects on the psychosocial outcomes of children who are retained are mostly negative (Cockx et al., 2018; Goos et al., 2021; Hughes et al., 2017; Pipa & Peixoto, 2022; Valbuena et al., 2021). Even though some states and school districts have instituted laws or policies requiring mandatory retention or promotion of students who do not achieve academic standards, other interventions, such as transitional classes, frequent progress monitoring, peer tutoring and individualized interventions delivered through a multitiered system of supports, show more academic promise for students who have difficulty learning (ASCA, 2021; Peguero et al., 2021).

Research shows negative, long-term effects from retention with a disproportionate impact on marginalized populations. Students who are retained are more likely to have adverse outcomes, including dropping out of school and having diminished postsecondary aspirations (Cockx et al., 2018; Hughes et al., 2018), having lower socioeconomic status and more likely to be eligible for government assistance (Goos et al., 2021), and are even at higher risk for future criminal behavior (Eren et al., 2022). Pipa and Peixoto (2022) found that retained students have lower task orientation, sense of school belonging and valuing, hypothesizing that this could lower motivation, which begins a cascade of negative outcomes. Grade-retention policies have a disproportionate effect on students from marginalized populations (de Brey et al., 2019; Lavy et al., 2012; Peguero et al., 2021; Pipa & Peixoto, 2022; Valbuena et al., 2021; Xiang & Chiu, 2022).

Social promotion is defined as the practice of passing students along from grade to grade with peers even if the students have not satisfied academic requirements or met performance standards at designated grade levels. While social promotion is seen as the only alternative to grade retention, there are more effective alternatives to both (Jacobs & Mantiri, 2022). Although social promotion is intended to avoid the negative effects of grade retention and promote self-esteem, research on social promotion mostly shows that it is no more effective or less harmful than grade retention (McMahon, 2018). It can also lower the student's or others' expected standards of student achievement and/or can give students and their parents a false sense of accomplishment.

Neither retention nor social promotion has been proven effective in remediation of learning difficulties or in maintaining academic gains (Goos et al., 2021; McMahon, 2018). In cases where students have academic difficulty, early intervention is crucial, as well as is differentiating instruction to help students reach their potential. Additionally, improved teaching strategies, curriculum enhancements and focused, evidenced-based interventions have been demonstrated to be effective for student success and are less costly (Peguero et al., 2021).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors have a professional and ethical obligation to protect students from practices hindering academic, career and social/emotional development and advocate for preventive, proactive alternatives to such practices (ASCA, 2022a; ASCA, 2023a). School counselors are aware of the detrimental effects of grade retentions and social promotions on students, schools and the community and advocate for the repeal of laws or policies promoting mandatory retentions or social promotion. School counselors share educational and social research with students, families, the community and decision makers so the decisions related to promotion and retention are made in the students' best interest.

When laws and/or policies require social promotion or retention, school counselors refer to the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (ASCA, 2022a) to support students' academic, career and social/emotional development. School counselors advocate for alternate interventions first, before recommending retention of a student.

School counselors promote alternatives to retention, social promotion and age-appropriate placement by supporting and advocating for the following:

- Research-based educational reforms that deliver best teaching and school counseling practice (ASCA, 2022)
- Comprehensive school counseling programs in all schools to address academic, career and social/emotional development (ASCA, 2023b)
- Early identification using available data to identify strengths and deficits to provide appropriate evidenced-based interventions (ASCA, 2023a)
- A team approach to decision-making that includes school counselors, teachers, administrators, student support workers and families to determine appropriate educational interventions (ASCA, 2021)
- Career and technical education opportunities for middle and high school students (ASCA, 2018)
- Literacy strategies to improve reading for all students
- Funding for pre-kindergarten programs taught by credentialed teachers (Bakken et al., 2017)
- Extended school year for remediation and curriculum enhancement for struggling learners and under-challenged learners
- Reduced class size
- Increased family engagement and volunteer involvement in schools (ASCA, 2022b)
- Education of families on research-based reading strategies to assist their children in developing academic skills

Summary

Research shows the negative impact retention and social promotion can have on student success. School counselors collaborate with students, families, teachers and educational leaders to consider the individual student's needs when making decisions on retention and social promotion and advocate to change laws or policies promoting mandatory retentions or social promotion.

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The School Counselor and Safe Schools and Crisis Response

(Adopted 2000; revised 2007, 2013, 2019)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors serve as leaders (ASCA, 2016; Oliver, Fleck, & Money-Brady, 2016) in safe-school initiatives. ASCA seeks to promote safe schools as can be noted in its many position statements, including Gun Safety, Promotion of Safe Schools through Conflict Resolution and Bullying/Harassment Prevention, Safe Schools and Crisis Response, and School Safety and the Use of Technology. Positive perceptions, school climate and overall school health are increased with schoolwide safety programming (Goodman-Scott & Grothaus, 2018).

The Rationale

All students need a safe, violence-free environment for learning. School counselors present themselves as a familiar, approachable resource to students, families and staff as they lead in schools, and they bridge communication between parties (Bray, 2016). Lapan, Wells, Petersen and McCann (2014) confirmed that the most positive protection for youth, both in and out of schools, is a connected school environment with responsive counseling services. Lapan et al. (2014) noted that this also helps to negate adverse effects of situations that could lead to risks. In their research of secondary students, Lapan et al. (2014) reported that those who felt their school counselor personally knew and responded to their concerns reported feeling safer and more connected in school.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors are vital resources in preventing violent incidents, intervening when concerns arise about potential violence and responding when violence occurs (Jonson, 2017). 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 (Duplechian & Morris, 2014; Nijs, Bun, Tempelaar, de Wit, Burger, Plevier & Boks, 2014; Kingston, Mattson, Dymnicki, Spier, Fitzgerald, Shipman & Elliott, 2018). School counselors are familiar with the school community and knowledgeable about the roles of community mental health providers and first responders such as law enforcement officials and emergency medical responders (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen & Pollitt, 2013).

Safe school and crisis response literature (Garran & Rasmussen, 2014; Rajan & Branas, 2018; Swartz, Osborne, Dawson-Edwards & Higgins, 2016) suggests several important crisis prevention and response preparedness practices in which school counselors should engage, including:

- providing individual and group counseling
- advocating for student safety by recommending school personnel put consistent procedures, communication and policies in place
- providing interventions for students at risk of dropping out or harming self or others
- offering peer mediation training, conflict resolution programs and anti-bullying programs
- supporting student-initiated programs such as Students Against Violence Everywhere
- providing family, faculty and staff education programs
- facilitating open communication between students and caring adults
- defusing critical incidents and providing related stress debriefing
- participating in district and school response team planning and practices and helping ensure students and staff are able to process/understand crisis response drills
- promoting trauma-informed practices
- advocating for restorative justice programs
- partnering with community resources

School counselors engage in roles congruent with their training. When school counselors are screening students for mental health conditions as part of a student support services team, they should use caution as noted in the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors in the section discussing risk assessments (A.9.b.). School counselors should avoid engaging in roles during drills that are incompatible with the school counseling role, such as acting as the school shooter/invader 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 themselves in fostering safety and in responding to critical response situations in schools. School counselors are a vital resource in preventing, intervening, and responding to crisis situations.

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The School Counselor and School Counseling Preparation Programs

(Adopted 2008, Revised 2014, 2020)

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors are best prepared through master’s-level and doctoral-level programs that align with the philosophy and vision of the ASCA National Model (2019a), the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies (2019b), the ASCA Standards for School Counseling Program Preparation (2019c), the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success (2014) and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016). These programs emphasize training in the implementation of a school counseling program that enhances student achievement and success.

The Rationale

School counselors are assuming an increasingly important role in education, and school counseling preparation programs are vital to the appropriate development of that role. School counselors significantly contribute to outcomes used to measure the success of students and schools; therefore, students in school counselor preparation programs need direct training and supervision in leadership and the implementation of a school counseling program (Cinotti, 2014).

The ASCA National Model (2019a), the ASCA Ethical Standards (2016), the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies (2019b) and the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (2014) have significantly influenced school counselor preparation and practice. These initiatives have placed significant attention on the preparation of school counselors, ensuring graduates are well-prepared to design, implement and assess a school counseling program that is proactive, accountable and aligned with the school’s mission.

The Role of School Counselor Preparation Programs

Effective school counseling preparation programs provide coursework and training that teaches school counseling students to design and implement a school counseling program. These programs help school counseling students develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to:

- Understand the organizational structure and governance of the educational system, as well as cultural, political and social influences on current educational practices
- Address legal, ethical and professional issues in pre-K–12 schools
- Understand developmental theory, counseling theory, career counseling theory, social justice theory and multiculturalism
- Understand mental health and the continuum of services, including prevention and intervention strategies for addressing academic, career and social/emotional development to enhance student success for all students
- Deliver effective instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling
- Develop interventions aligned to the multitiered system of supports as described in the corresponding position statement, *The School Counselor and Multitiered System of Supports*
- Collaborate and consult with stakeholders (e.g., families/guardians, teachers, administration, community stakeholders) to create learning environments promoting student educational equity and success for all students
- Identify impediments to student learning, developing strategies to enhance learning and collaborating with stakeholders to improve student achievement
- Ensure equitable access to resources promoting academic achievement, social/emotional growth and career development for all students
- Use advocacy and data-informed school counseling practices to close achievement and opportunity gaps
- Understand how the school counseling programs relate to the educational program
- Understand outcome research data and best practices as identified in the school counseling research literature
- Understand the importance of serving on school leadership teams and acting as educational leaders

Field-based experiences are essential to the preparation of school counselors. These experiences should provide training that aligns with the school counselor preparation program and further develops the student’s knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to implement a school counseling program. Field-based experiences are supervised by a licensed or certified school counselor in the pre-K–12 setting and a university supervisor with the appropriate school counselor educator qualifications.

School counseling preparation programs are facilitated by school counselor educators who have the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to prepare school counselors to promote the academic, career and social/emotional development of all students. School counselor educators have appropriate preparation, including knowledge of the ASCA National Model, the ASCA School Counseling Professional Standards & Competencies, organization and administration of pre-K–12 schools, counseling children and adolescents, and current issues and trends in school counseling. School counselor educators should hold an earned doctoral degree in counselor education, counseling psychology, educational leadership or closely related field. Adjunct faculty/instructors will minimally have an earned master’s degree in school counseling and have school counseling experience. All university instructors should have experience as an employed school counselor in the field.

Summary

School counselor preparation programs emphasize development of the knowledge, attitudes and skills essential for the implementation of effective school counseling programs. These programs align with the philosophy and vision of the ASCA National Model (2019a), the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies (2019b), the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (2014) and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2017), creating a program empowering all students to succeed and achieve in their pre-K–12 experiences. School counselor educators have the appropriate education, training, experience and commitment to prepare school counselors able to respond to the changing expectations and dynamics of students, families, schools and communities.

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The School Counselor and School Counseling Programs

(Adopted 1988; revised 1993, 1997, 2005, 2012, 2017, 2023)

ASCA Position

School counselors design and implement school counseling programs that improve a range of student learning and behavioral outcomes. “The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs” outlines the components of a school counseling program and brings school counselors together with one vision and one voice, creating unity and focus toward improving student achievement and supporting student development.

The Rationale

The school counseling program is comprehensive in scope, preventive in design and developmental in nature and is an integral component of the school’s mission. Informed by student data and based on the ASCA National Model, school counseling programs are provided by a state-credentialed school counselor and:

- Are delivered to all students systematically
- Include a developmentally appropriate curriculum focused on the mindsets and behaviors all students need for postsecondary readiness and success
- Close achievement and opportunity gaps
- Result in improved student achievement, attendance and discipline

School counseling programs improve a range of student learning and behavioral outcomes (Savitz-Romer et al, 2022). Effective school counseling programs are a collaborative effort between the school counselor, families, community stakeholders, and other educators to create an environment resulting in a positive impact on student achievement. Education professionals, including school counselors, value and respond to the diversity and individual differences in our societies and communities in culturally sensitive and responsive ways. School counseling programs in both the brick-and-mortar and virtual settings ensure equitable access to opportunities and rigorous curriculum for all students to participate fully in the educational process.

Research shows that schools designated as Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) schools had significantly higher schoolwide proficiency rates in English as compared with the control schools (Mullen et al., 2019). This same study also found that when schools reduce the student-to-school counselor ratio to ASCA’s recommended 250:1, students who receive free and reduced lunch at high-poverty schools achieve improved academic outcomes (Mullen et al., 2019).

The School Counselor’s Role

School counselors focus their skills, time, and energy on direct and indirect services to all students as well as program planning and school support. To achieve maximum program effectiveness, ASCA recommends a student-to-school-counselor ratio of 250:1. Although ratios vary across states, school districts and even grade levels, the growing body of research supports that implementation of school counseling programs positively affects outcome data (e.g., student achievement and discipline referrals) at all grade levels (Lancaster et al, 2021).

The ASCA National Model recommends that school counselors spend 80% or more of their time in direct and indirect services to students. These direct and indirect activities should come from the duties appropriate to the role of the school counselor rather than inappropriate duties assigned to school counselors as listed in the ASCA National Model Executive Summary (2019b). Twenty percent or less of the school counselor’s time should be focused on program planning and school support including:

- Reviewing school data
- Developing annual student outcome goals
- Creating classroom, group and closing-the-gap action plans
- Reporting results of action plans to the school community
- Discussing the priorities of the school counseling program in the annual administrative conference

Duties that fall outside of the school counselor’s role as described in the ASCA National Model should be limited and performed by other school staff to support a school’s smooth operation and allow school counselors to continue to focus on students’ academic, career, and social/emotional needs. Fair-share responsibilities should not preclude implementing, managing and accessing a school counseling program.

School counselors participate as members of the educational team and use the skills of leadership, advocacy, and collaboration to promote systemic change. The framework of a school counseling program consists of the following four components: define, manage, deliver and assess. See “The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs” for more detailed information.

DEFINE

Three sets of school counseling standards define the school counseling profession. These standards help new and experienced school counselors develop, implement and assess their school counseling program to improve student outcomes.

Student Standards

- ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success

Professional Standards

- ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors
- ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies

MANAGE

To be delivered effectively, the school counseling program must be efficiently and effectively managed. The ASCA National Model provides school counselors with the following program focus and planning tools to guide the design and implementation of a school counseling program that gets results.

Program Focus

- Beliefs
- Vision Statement
- Mission Statement

Program Planning

- School Data Summary
- Annual Student Outcome Goals
- Action Plans
 - Classroom and Group
 - Closing the Gap
- Lesson Plans
- Annual Administrative Conference
- Use of Time
- Calendars
 - Annual
 - Weekly
- Advisory Council

DELIVER

School counselors deliver a school counseling program in collaboration with students, families, school staff, and community stakeholders. The ASCA National Model (2019) and the ASCA National Model Implementation Guide (2019d) have specific details and examples about each of the following areas:

Direct Services with Students

Direct services are face-to-face or virtual interactions between school counselors and students and include the following:

- Instruction
- Appraisal and Advisement
- Counseling

Indirect Services for Students

Indirect services are provided on behalf of students as a result of the school counselors' interactions with others including:

- Consultation
- Collaboration
- Referrals

ASSESS

To achieve the best results for students, school counselors regularly assess their program to:

- Determine its effectiveness
- Inform improvements to their school counseling program design and delivery
- Show how student growth and progress are different as a result of the school counseling program

Annually, an experienced administrator completes the school counselor performance appraisal to evaluate the school counselor's overall performance. Appraisal documents are often developed in alignment with state or district guidelines and may appear in a variety of frameworks selected by state and district leaders.

Essential components of performance appraisal include evidence of:

- Design of a school counseling program
- Data-informed annual goals along with the measured impact of direct services delivery
- Data-informed classroom, small-group and closing-the-gap activities and interventions
- Calendars reflecting appropriate use of time aligned with ASCA National Model recommendation of 80% of time in direct and indirect services to students
- Collection and analysis of results data from classroom, small-group and closing-the-gap activities and interventions

Summary

School counselors in both in-person and virtual/online environments develop and deliver school counseling programs that support and promote student achievement and standardize the assessment of program effectiveness. As outlined in the ASCA National Model, these programs include a systematic and planned program delivery involving all students and enhancing the learning process. The school counseling program is supported by appropriate resources and implemented by a credentialed school counselor. The ASCA National Model brings school counselors together with one vision and one voice, creating unity and focus toward improving student achievement and supporting student development.

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The School Counselor and School Counselor Supervision

(Adopted 2021)

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors engage in quality school counseling supervision during their training and professional practice to enhance the implementation of their school counseling program. Supervision by individuals who have a background in school counseling or certification in supervision enhances school counselors' professional growth and leadership development in their roles as practitioners and potential supervisors.

The Rationale

School counselors pursue consultation and supervision in their school counseling training program and throughout their professional career to strengthen their school counseling skills and remain culturally supportive and ethically compliant (ASCA, 2016; ASCA, 2019; ASCA, 2020). Supervision provides opportunities for novice and experienced school counselors to develop and refine the skills required to address the needs of pre-K–12 students through typical stages of development and as they navigate societal challenges (Bultsma, 2021). Supervision is also helpful in adapting to changing cultural and environmental demands.

To meet the needs of future students, to support current school counselors in the field, and to sustain the school counseling profession for the future, school counseling ethical and professional standards highlight the need for school counselors to seek supervision and training as supervisors (ASCA, 2016; ASCA, 2019; ASCA, 2020; CACREP, 2016). Effective supervision infuses knowledge of supervision models specific to school counseling, ethics, social justice, professional development, leadership, advocacy and other professional roles such as gatekeeping (ASCA, 2017; ASCA, 2019; ASCA, 2020; Levitt, et al., 2019). Trained school counseling supervisors provide necessary professional development to assist school counselors and school-counselors-in-training to be well-prepared, skilled and competent practitioners (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019; McCoy & Neale-McFall, 2017). As gatekeepers, supervisors also intervene with professional colleagues when the safety and welfare of pre-K–12 students is in jeopardy (ASCA, 2016; Schuermann, et al., 2018).

The Role of School Counselor Supervisors

Effective school counselor supervision is an intensive, interpersonally focused, individual or small-group intervention delivered by a more senior member of the profession to a junior member to facilitate continued professional growth (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019). School counselor supervisors work to:

- support and encourage school counselor development
- foster the continued development of instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling skills
- facilitate personal and professional growth for operating in complex educational settings, including cultural competence and anti-racist work
- promote adherence to and integration of school counselor standards and competencies related to leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change
- model the development of data-informed and accountable school counseling programs
- serve as gatekeepers for future professionals' entry into the school counseling profession
- safeguard students and families with whom the supervisees work
- promote ethical behavior of supervisees under their supervision
- remain current on trends, techniques and strategies within the field of school counseling
- obtain professional development in supervision (ASCA, 2016; ASCA, 2019; ASCA, 2020; Bernard & Goodyear, 2019)

School counseling site supervisors must adhere to the requirements and standards of integrity, leadership and professionalism while supervising practicum students and interns (ASCA, 2016). Graduate programs training school counselors are expected to assist in training site supervisors (CACREP, 2016).

School counseling supervisors must have the following qualifications:

- a minimum of a master's degree in school counseling or related profession with equivalent qualifications, including appropriate certifications and/or licenses
- a minimum of two years of professional experience within school counseling
- relevant training in school counseling supervision

(CACREP, 2016; Neyland-Brown, et al., 2019)

New school counselors should maintain professional supervision (McLain, 2019). Notwithstanding, all school counseling professionals benefit from formal or informal mentoring from those school counselors with specific experience and competencies (ASCA, 2019; Brott, et al., 2016; Tang, 2020).

Summary

School counselor supervision involves the continued personal and professional development of currently practicing school counselors and school-counselors-in-training regarding the knowledge and skills needed for providing effective school counseling programs. Supervision focuses on the development and growth of school counseling skills and the integration of school counselor standards and competencies in practice. School counselor supervisors have the appropriate background, experience and training needed to prepare school counselors to meet the ever-changing needs and challenges of students, families, schools and communities.

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The School Counselor and School-Family-Community Partnerships

(Adopted 2010; Revised 2016, 2022)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors have an essential and unique role in promoting, facilitating and advocating for collaboration with parents/guardians and community stakeholders. These collaborations are an important aspect of implementing school counseling programs that promote all students' successful academic, career and social/emotional development.

The Rationale

The ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019a) and the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies (ASCA, 2019b) endorse school counselors' roles in facilitating school-family-community partnerships. School counselors are trained in counseling, human relations and collaboration skills (e.g., group dynamics, consultation skills), which makes them well-suited to engage families and community stakeholders, and they enhance the collaboration of school-family-community stakeholders by being the catalyst through which these collaborations occur (Bryan et al., 2017). Family involvement benefits both the student and the school, as it increases student achievement and attendance, promotes career development, enhances school climate and fosters student resilience (Castillo, 2022).

The School Counselor's Role

In establishing school and community partnerships, school counselors work with students, their families, school staff and community members. In fostering partnerships, school counselors:

Actively pursue collaboration with family members and community stakeholders

Promote student academic, career and social/emotional development

Encompass existing school, family and community strengths, resources and assets (Bryan et al., 2020)

Inform the school community about relevant community resources

Foster resilience through equity-based school-family-community partnerships and parent-family-school agreements based on empowerment, democracy, collaboration, social justice and strength-based principles (Bryan et al., 2020).

Work to end racism/bias by collaborating with families, educators, businesses and community organizations focused on anti-racism/bias (ASCA, 2021)

Focusing on family and community partnerships in schools is an important aspect to culturally responsive education (Castillo, 2022). School counselors serve as leaders, advocates, collaborators, facilitators, initiators and evaluators to create, enrich and assess the effect of these partnerships on student success within the school counseling program.

Summary

School counselors work to improve student outcomes through the facilitation of school-family-community partnerships. School-family-community partnerships have increased students' successful academic, career and social/emotional development. School counselors are called on to create, lead, facilitate and assess these partnerships and work to remove barriers to these helpful collaborative relationships.

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The School Counselor and School Resource Officers

(Adopted 2023)

ASCA Position

School counselors are leaders, advocates, collaborators, and consultants who create systemic change to ensure equitable educational outcomes through the school counseling program. School counselors collaborate and advocate with school resource officers (SROs) to ensure equal opportunities and safety for all students.

The Rationale

The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO, n.d.) defines an SRO as, “a carefully selected, specifically trained and properly equipped law enforcement officer with sworn authority, trained in school-based law enforcement and crisis response, and assigned by an employing law enforcement agency to work collaboratively with one or more schools using community-oriented policing concepts” (para. 2). Despite a lack of evidence on the long-term effect that the presence of SROs has on student outcomes, many school districts continue to utilize SROs with the goal to increase safety in schools.

SROs contribute to safety “by ensuring a safe and secure campus, educating students about law-related topics, and mentoring students as counselors and role models” (NASRO, 2012, p. 21). School counselors are also leaders in safe school initiatives and serve as active participants in fostering safety in schools.

The most prominent concern regarding SROs in schools is a lack of consistency in training and cohesion with program design and implementation. This lack of consistency can lead “to conflict and misunderstanding that can have negative consequences for students and schools” (Fisher et al., 2022 p. 562).

Evidence presented against SRO positions is centered on concerns that the SRO presence contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline. Research shows “the presence of a school resource officer increases the likelihood that students will be disciplined and arrested for offenses that were once resolved through non-legal means by school staff and administration” (Almanza et al., 2022, p. 2). This evidence, however, does not apply only to SROs as, “It is difficult to discern SROs’ impact on or contribution to the school-to-prison link” because “such a pipeline features numerous stakeholders, including administrators, teachers and staff, who might also contribute to this critical issue” (Paez & Colvin, 2021, p. 192).

The School Counselor’s Role

Through the school counseling program, school counselors advocate for school safety and success for all students and collaborate to remove barriers that may impede equitable student outcomes. As systemic change agents, school counselors:

- Advocate that in districts where they are employed, SROs follow the guidelines, training and education recommended by NASRO
- Advocate for uniformity in SRO programming (Almanza et al., 2022) and that school administrators and district leaders follow the memorandum of understanding, which outlines the “tasks to be performed by the SRO when assisting school officials in providing a safe and effective learning environment” (NASRO, 2012, p. 47)
- Collaborate with administrators, teams and school staff, including SROs, to prevent violence on campus
- Work with SROs to educate the school community about collaborative services designed to meet students’ needs
- Engage in a collaborative problem-solving model with SROs to meet student needs to deliver a community approach to problem-solving, as opposed to traditional legal responses (Fisher et al., 2022)
- Consult with SROs to inform school counselor interventions with students in need of support
- Educate the school community on best practices that build positive relationships between SROs and students and families (Fisher et al., 2022)

Summary

While the research regarding the impact of the presence of SROs on student outcomes is divided, in schools where SROs are employed, it is the school counselor’s responsibility to advocate, collaborate, and educate to ensure equal opportunities and safety for all students and partners.

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The School Counselor and Social/Emotional Development

(Adopted 2017; revised 2023)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors deliver school counseling programs that enhance student growth in three domain areas: academic, career, and social/emotional development. As a part of that program, school counselors implement strategies and activities to help all students enhance their social/emotional development – the mindsets and behaviors students need to manage emotions and learn and apply interpersonal skills - while recognizing that growth in all three domains is necessary for students to be successful now and later in life.

The Rationale

As social/emotional experts, school counselors design and implement school counseling programs using the direct student services of classroom instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling, as well as the indirect student services of referrals, consultation and collaboration with families, teachers and administrators to promote all students' social/emotional development. (ASCA, 2019). School counselors engaging in direct services yield “desirable outcomes in a variety of areas including students' social and emotional development, academic performance, and college or career pursuits” (Lemberger-Truelove et al., 2021, p. 1).

The social/emotional domain is composed of standards to help students manage emotions and learn and apply interpersonal skills as early as preschool and kindergarten (ASCA, 2021a). School counselors teach mindsets and behaviors for student success in all grade levels to enhance the learning process and create a culture of college and career readiness for all students. According to a meta-analysis by Durlak et al. (2022), students who had access to social emotional learning (SEL) programs were shown to have positive outcomes including, “improved personal and social skills, attitudes, positive social behavior, and academic performance, and reductions in problematic behavior, emotional distress, and drug use” (p. 23). In addition, Cipriano et al. (2023) found that students enrolled in schools with SEL programs are “more engaged, have better quality relationships with their teachers, and have demonstrated increased prosociality” (p.5).

The school counselor collaborates with the school-based leadership team and other school staff to identify students' social/emotional needs. The school counselor can then implement interventions designed to target social emotional needs including standalone classroom instruction, inclusive and affirming practices, integration of SEL with academic curricula, and whole school approaches (Durlak et al., 2022). An analysis by Lemberger-Truelove et al. (2021) found that school counseling interventions in the social emotional domain resulted in “greater positive changes in stress tolerance, social curiosity, executive functioning, and academic achievement” (p. 5). Overall, evidence has shown that well-implemented SEL programs can have a more positive impact on academic performance than those that are exclusively educational in nature (Durlak et al., 2022).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors play a critical role in supporting social/emotional development as they:

- Use evidence-based, inclusive, and trauma-informed curriculum and resources when delivering interventions to enhance social/emotional development.
- Collaborate with classroom teachers to provide school counseling lessons to all students through direct instruction, team-teaching or providing lesson plans for learning activities or units in classrooms aimed at social/ emotional development (ASCA, 2019).
- Provide targeted multi-tiered approaches to support the needs of individuals and small groups of students (ASCA, 2021b; Durlak et al., 2022)
- Understand the nature and range of human characteristics specific to child and adolescent development.
- Identify and employ appropriate appraisal methods for individual and group interventions that support K–12 students' social/emotional development.
- Use counseling theories that are effective in a school setting to inform both direct and indirect student services supporting K–12 students' social/emotional development.

- Use assessment in the context of appropriate statistics and research methodology, follow-up assessment and measurement methods to implement appropriate program planning for social/emotional development.
- Collaborate with school staff to create an inclusive and affirming environment for all students
- Collaborate with community resources in supporting students and refer as appropriate when student needs exceed the scope of the school counselor role.

Summary

Interventions that promote social/emotional development improve social behavior and academic performance and reduce problematic behaviors and emotional distress. School counselors provide a school counseling program that helps all students enhance their social/emotional development and attain the mindsets and behaviors needed for success while recognizing that growth in the three domains of academic, career, and social/emotional development is necessary for students to be successful now and later in life.

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The School Counselor and Student Mental Health

(Adopted 2009, Revised 2015, 2020)

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors recognize and respond to the need for mental health services that promote social/emotional wellness and development for all students. School counselors advocate for the mental health needs of all students by offering instruction that enhances awareness of mental health, appraisal and advisement addressing academic, career and social/emotional development; short-term counseling interventions; and referrals to community resources for long-term support.

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. Even so, most students in need do not receive adequate mental health supports (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2013). Research indicates 20% of students are in need of mental health services, yet only one out of five of these students receive the necessary services (Erford, 2019). Furthermore, students of color and those from families with low income are at greater risk for mental health needs but are even less likely to receive the appropriate services (Panigua, 2013) despite increased national attention to these inequities (Marrast, Himmelstein & Woolhandler, 2016).

Of school-age children who receive any behavioral and/or mental health services, 70%–80% receive them at school (Atkins et al., 2010). Preventive school-based mental health and behavioral services are essential. Without planned intervention for students exhibiting early-warning signs, setbacks in academic, career and social/emotional development can result during later school years and even adulthood.

The ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (ASCA, 2014) 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 offering instruction that enhances awareness of mental health and short-term counseling interventions designed to promote positive mental health and 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. School counselors acknowledge they may be the only counseling professional available to students and their families. Thus, school counselors:

- Deliver instruction that proactively enhances awareness of mental health; promotes positive, healthy behaviors; 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
 - changes in school performance and attendance
 - mood changes
 - complaints of illness before school
 - 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 about problems at school
 - dealing with existing mental health concerns
- Provide short-term counseling and crisis intervention focused on mental health or situational concerns such as grief or difficult transitions
- Provide referrals to school and community resources that treat mental health issues (suicidal ideation, violence, abuse and depression) with the intent of removing barriers to learning and helping the student return to the classroom
- Educate teachers, administrators, families and community stakeholders 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

- Advocate, collaborate and coordinate with school and community stakeholders to meet the needs of the whole child and to ensure students and their families have access to mental health services
- Recognize and address barriers to accessing mental health services and the associated stigma, including cultural beliefs and linguistic impediments
- Adhere to appropriate 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
 - 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, 2016)

Summary

Students' unmet mental health needs pose barriers to learning and development. Because of school counselors' training and position, they are uniquely qualified to provide instruction, appraisal and advisement and short-term counseling to students and referral services to students and their families. Although school counselors do not provide long-term mental health therapy in schools, they provide a school counseling program designed to meet the developmental needs of all students. As a component of this program, school counselors collaborate with other educators and community service providers to meet the needs of the whole child.

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The School Counselor and Student Postsecondary Recruitment

(Adopted 2004; revised 2009, 2015, 2021)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors encourage and promote positive and equitable reception of career and postsecondary educational institution recruiters into the school setting. These recruiters may include individuals from organizations such as, but not limited to:

- apprenticeship programs
- athletic programs
- career and technical education institutions
- colleges and universities
- financial aid and scholarship programs
- military branches

The Rationale

The K–12 educational system is an important component of the national structure that prepares students for the world of work (Cushing et al., 2019) and is essential for students as they explore postsecondary career and educational options. Every student has the right to access instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling for postsecondary preparation, access and success (ASCA, 2019).

Through implementation of a school counseling program aligned with the ASCA National Model (2019), school counselors deliver information on postsecondary career and college options and collaborate with school staff, families and youth programs to maximize success (Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2010; Bryan, et al., 2017; Holcomb-McCoy, 2010). School counselors help all students understand the benefits of completing their K–12 education including (a) exposure to and preparation for college and career opportunities, (b) support for navigating the financial aid process to ensure college is an affordable reality and (c) access to enrichment and extracurricular activities including summer learning opportunities.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors are advocates for students in the recruitment process and ensure students and their families are informed of their rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and in accordance with the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016). School counselors provide and advocate for postsecondary awareness, exploration and planning for each student, thereby supporting students' rights to choose from a wide array of options when they leave secondary education. School counselors also examine data to ensure students from underrepresented groups, such as students of various racial and ethnic backgrounds, students with disabilities and students who are LGBTQ+ are provided equitable access to college and career programs and information.

Through instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling, school counselors guide all students through the postsecondary planning and recruitment process, helping them learn critical strategies and skills for success including:

- setting long- and short-term goals
- making informed decisions
- managing transitions (ASCA, 2019)

Through consultation and collaboration, school counselors play a critical role in bridging communication gaps between families and recruitment entities. School counselors consult and collaborate with stakeholders (ASCA, 2019), including:

- college access partners and recruiters to prepare information for students and families about the differences among public, independent and for-profit colleges and universities in relationship to the costs and outcomes
- recruiters to encourage them to create informational sessions and activities for families
- school administrators to develop and disseminate written information about the policies and procedures for obtaining student information as well as the rights of students and parents/guardians to withhold their information
- families to understand waivers for release of information
- families and students to encourage open conversation and communication about interests and goals
- recruiters and families to encourage them to work directly with students

Summary

School counselors assist students and their families as they make informed decisions about postsecondary options. School counselors collaborate with individuals involved in the student recruitment process to ensure the delivery of comprehensive, accurate information while protecting student rights as specified by state/federal law, school district policies and procedures, and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors.

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The School Counselor and Student Safety with Digital Technologies

(Adopted 2000, revised 2006, 2012, 2017, 2023)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Digital technology (e.g. cell phones/mobile devices, gaming platforms, social media, and the internet) is a useful tool in creating equitable and developmental learning opportunities to enhance student academic, career, and social/emotional development. School counselors educate students and families about responsible use, digital citizenship, cultural, ethical, and legal considerations and collaborate with families, educators and law enforcement officials to alert students to risks technology poses.

The Rationale

To be successful in school and within their relationships and prepared for postsecondary opportunities, students need to be proficient in and aware of the use of interactive digital technology (ASCA, 2021). However, when students access social media, gaming platforms and interactive digital technology, they leave a digital footprint that makes them vulnerable to significant risks that compromise their safety, security and reputation (Gallo et al., 2018; Su et al., 2021). Technology exposes students to behavioral, safety and privacy risks, such as:

- Cyberbullying/harassment
- Invasion of privacy and disclosure of personal information
- Inappropriate online communications
- Access to inappropriate content and media
- Sexual predators and human trafficking
- Addictions to cell phone use, gaming, social media and/or the internet

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors have a responsibility to promote healthy student development and to protect students from digital technology's potential risks. School counselors consider the ethical and legal considerations of technological applications, including confidentiality concerns, student and community safety concerns, security issues, potential benefits and limitations of communication practices using electronic media, and managing appropriate boundaries with students and stakeholders (ASCA, 2022). In addition, school counselors, in collaboration with other stakeholder groups:

- Adhere to legal, ethical, district and school policies and guidelines when using technology with students and stakeholders and/or working in a virtual school counseling setting (ASCA, 2023)
- Provide culturally sustaining instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling to help all students demonstrate technology use that enhances learning strategies, self-management and social skills (ASCA, 2021)
- Provide educators and families with guidelines for the appropriate use of technology by students
- Address individual and systemic repercussions related to the impact of inappropriate student social media/technology use (ASCA, 2021; Gallo, et al., 2018; Tinstman Jones, et al., 2020)
- Take measures to maintain the confidentiality of student information and educational records stored or transmitted through any electronic technology (ASCA, 2022)
- Keep informed about new academic integrity programs and technological advances that may affect students or education systems (e.g., artificial intelligence (technology))
- Be involved in creating school and district policies to address potential risks and benefits

If a school or district uses an online student safety software (e.g., Gaggle, Securly, GoGuardian) to monitor for potentially harmful behavior, school counselors advocate for school policies that share identified concerns directly to parents/guardians. These notifications should be coupled with resources and/or referrals, as well as procedures for students to follow in emergencies when the school counselor is not available.

In addition, schools or districts should respond to technological reports of threats, harm to self and others in collaboration with multidisciplinary school teams. Inform parents/guardians and school administration when a student poses a serious and foreseeable risk of harm to self or others (Cowen, et al., 2021). This notification is to be done after careful deliberation and

consultation with appropriate professionals, such as other school counselors, school nurse, school psychologist, school social worker, school resource officer, or child protective services. Even if the danger appears relatively remote, parents/guardians must be notified (ASCA, 2022).

School counselors take the following actions to promote the safe, responsible use of technology (ASCA, 2022; iKeepSafe, 2022):

- Advocate for equitable access to technology for all students
- Advocate for school policies and multitiered interventions that detect harmful student behavior and engage in risk-reduction approaches
- Respond to online incidents affecting conditions for learning
- Facilitate and monitor school wide cyberbullying prevention and intervention programs
- Promote and advocate for practices supporting a positive school climate, culture and belonging
- Address and promote student digital citizenship, cyber-balance, healthy content choices, social awareness and the impact of digital habits on mental health through direct student services and collaboration with families and the school community
- Develop peer-helper programs encouraging students to help each other understand technological risks, practice responsible use and support other students who are vulnerable
- Refrain from the use of personal social media, text and email accounts to interact with students unless sanctioned by the school district

Summary

School counselors recognize the impact interactive digital technology has on student learning, wellbeing, and safety. School counselors promote the responsible use of technology in collaboration with families, school staff, and the community to increase and improve student well-being and safety.

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The School Counselor and Students with Disabilities

(Adopted 1999; Revised 2004, 2010, 2013, 2016, 2022)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors encourage and support all students' academic, career and social/emotional development through school counseling programs. School counselors are committed to helping all students realize their potential and meet or exceed academic standards with consideration for both the strengths and challenges resulting from disabilities and other special needs.

The Rationale

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires public schools to provide a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for all students. Under IDEA, 7.2 million public school students are identified as having a disability and receive special education services (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). IDEA defines a child with a disabilities to be a child evaluated in accordance with §§300.304 through 300.311 as having any of the following:

- intellectual disability
- hearing impairment (including deafness)
- speech or language impairment
- visual impairment (including blindness)
- serious emotional disturbance (referred to in this part as “emotional disturbance”)
- orthopedic impairment
- autism
- traumatic brain injury
- other health impairment
- specific learning disability
- deaf-blindness
- multiple disabilities

In addition, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects qualified individuals with disabilities defined as persons with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. For a complete list of major life activities refer to ADA Amendments Act of 2008.

School counselors strive to help all students achieve their full potential, including students with disabilities, within the scope of the school counseling program. School counselors recognize their strengths and limitations in working with students with disabilities, are aware of current research and seek to implement best practices in working with students presenting with any disability category and who, by reason thereof, need special education and related services.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors provide direct and indirect services to students with disabilities through the implementation of a school counseling program (Goodman-Scott, et al., 2019). School counselors recognize the strengths of students with disabilities as well as their challenges and provide best practices and current research in supporting their academic, career and social/emotional needs (ASCA, 2022).

School counselor responsibilities may include, but are not limited to:

- Offering curriculum lessons, individual and/or group counseling that are culturally responsive and inclusive of the accommodations provided to students with special needs
- providing short-term, goal-focused counseling in instances where it is appropriate to include these strategies as a part of the IEP or 504 plan
- encouraging family involvement in the educational process
- consulting and collaborating with staff and families to understand the special needs of a student and understanding the accommodations and modifications needed to assist the student

- advocating for students with special needs in the school and in the community
- contributing to the school’s multidisciplinary team within the scope and practice of the school counseling program
- identifying students who may need to be assessed to determine special education or 504 plan eligibility
- collaborating with other related student support professionals (e.g., school psychologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, special education staff, speech and language pathologists) in the delivery of services
- providing assistance with developing academic, transition and postsecondary plans for students with IEPs and 504 plans as appropriate

Inappropriate administrative or supervisory responsibilities for the school counselor include but are not limited to:

- making singular decisions regarding placement or retention
- serving in any supervisory capacity related to IDEA implementation
- serving as the school district representative for the team writing the IEP
- coordinating, writing or supervising a specific plan under Section 504 of Public Law 93-112
- coordinating, writing or supervising IEP implementation
- providing long-term therapy

Summary

The school counselor takes an active role in student achievement and postsecondary planning by providing a school counseling program for all students. As part of this program, school counselors advocate for students with special needs and disabilities, encourage family involvement in their child’s education and collaborate with other educational professionals to promote academic achievement, college/career readiness and social/emotional wellness for all.

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The School Counselor and Suicide Prevention/Awareness

(Adopted 2018)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors work to identify behavioral and social/emotional signs of suicide risk among their students and ensure prevention methods are in place. It is the school counselor's ethical and moral responsibility to report suspected suicide risk to legal guardians and the appropriate authorities. In acknowledging suspected suicide risk, school counselors exercise reasonable care to protect students from unforeseeable harm (ASCA, 2016).

The Rationale

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC, 2015), suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 15 and 35 and the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10 to 14. Overall the nation has seen a 24 percent increase in suicide completions over the past 15 years (CDC, 2015). Data from the 2015 National Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS) showed that 29.9 percent or three out of 10 U.S. high school students expressed feeling sad or hopeless almost daily for two or more weeks (CDC, 2015). In addition, CDC (2015) reported that 17.7 percent of students expressed suicide ideation, and 14.6 percent of students had completed plans for their suicide. These statistics are alarming and reveal that students in significant numbers experience feelings and thoughts that isolate and lead to suicidal ideation and plans. Raising awareness around suicide and implementing suicide prevention initiatives is important in reinforcing student support and safety measures.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors recognize the threat of suicide among children and adolescents and strive to create a supportive environment. School counselors do not wait for certainty but rather the notion of a potential suicide places school counselors in a position to immediately notify parents/guardians (ASCA 2017). School counselors contact parents/guardians when placed on notice that a suicide is possible through student self-report, peer report, rumors, hearsay or any other means. It is a well-known fact that students will often deny suicidal ideation to escape the gaze of adults while confiding their true intentions to their peers. School counselors provide parents/guardians with referral resources for students (Stone, 2018). In the case that the parents/guardians do not take seriously the potential threat, the school counselor makes a report to child protective service (Stone, 2018). School counselors work to raise awareness of suicide and suicide ideation, train school personnel and create opportunities to identify resources available for school personnel (Desrochers & Houck, 2013).

To achieve their ethical obligation to protect students, school counselors must maintain current training in:

- Being informed about signs of suicidal thoughts
- Being knowledgeable about the resources available
- Preparing students, staff, colleagues and parents to recognize warning symptoms for suicidal behavior
- Referring students who demonstrate signs of suicidal thoughts to local community agencies

Summary

Through the implementation of comprehensive suicide prevention/awareness, school counselors ensure students and faculty are well-prepared to address and identify the negative thoughts and experiences that could potentially lead a student to suicide ideation.

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The School Counselor and Suicide Risk Assessment

(Adopted 2020)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors support best practice in suicide prevention to reduce suicide risk in children and adolescents and are part of a collaborative team who respond when students are identified as at-risk for suicide. When becoming aware of a student considering suicide, school counselors assert their ethical and legal responsibility to report suspected suicide risk to parents/guardians and the appropriate authorities.

The Rationale

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data reveals that from 2007 to 2017, suicide was the second-leading cause of death for persons aged 10–19 and that suicide rates have been steadily increasing (Curtin and Heron, 2017). Because school counselors work with all students through the delivery of school counseling programs, school counselors are in a position to raise awareness among students, families and the education community regarding student suicide and assist educators in understanding how to recognize and respond to suicide risk.

The School Counselor’s Role

Through their work in classroom, group and individual settings, school counselors work to create supportive relationships with all students and to identify students’ social/emotional needs (ASCA, 2019). Through these interactions as well as through consultation with school staff, school counselors may become aware that a student could be at risk for suicide by report from the student, the student’s peers or school staff. School counselors are acutely aware that if they are placed on notice by any of these means, they must always notify parents/guardians about this risk. The exception is when the parent/guardian’s abuse or neglect is the expressed reason for the student’s suicidal ideation. In these cases, the school counselor must contact child protective services.

School counselors support the development of district policy based on best practices in suicide prevention (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, American School Counselor Association, National Association of School Psychologists & The Trevor Project, 2019). When district suicide-risk protocols are in place, school counselors must follow them, but they advocate for change when the protocols do not comply with ethical standards (ASCA, 2016). When the school district does not have a written suicide protocol for school personnel or the policy does not comply with ethical standards and school counselor scope of practice, school counselors advocate for the team-based creation of suicide-risk policies and procedures supporting students’ mental health needs and aligned with team members’ competencies.

If state legislation or school board policy requires a schoolwide screening program, school counselors advocate for ethical use of valid and reliable instruments with concerns for cultural sensitivity and bias (ASCA, 2016). School counselors also advocate as a non-negotiable that parents/guardians are to be notified of any suicidal ideation. Regardless of whether the student is 18 years of age or older, school counselors’ ethical imperative is to notify parents/guardians of their child’s suicidal ideation (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 2020; Stone, 2017).

If school counselors are required to use assessments, screenings or any type of instrument to determine the suicide risk, they advocate that they are never required to negate any level of risk of harm, as students may tell school counselors what they believe will get them out from under scrutiny. School counselors also advocate that the school district has a policy whereby parents/guardians are always contacted and notified of anything learned through an investigation of potential suicide, or with any instrument, that will guide parents/guardians in efforts to protect their child. Contacting parents/guardians is the school counselor’s primary responsibility (Stone, 2017).

When a student is suicidal and in crisis in school, the school counselor’s primary role is to keep the student safe until the student can be transferred to the parents/guardians. Before releasing the student to the parents/guardians, school counselors:

- are clear with parents/guardians about what is known regarding the student’s suicidal ideation
- do not negate the risk of harm based on a student’s self-report
- avoid using words or phrases such as “impulse control” or “low risk” in an effort to soften the message

- strongly encourage parents/guardians to seek a medical or mental health provider for a comprehensive assessment of their child
- help the family find resources if needed

As parents/guardians are the people most invested long-term in a child’s life, they must be able to exercise custody and control over their child’s well-being. However, in the event the parents/guardians are neglecting the child’s mental health needs, school counselors make a report to child protective services. School counselors document all of these interactions with the parents/guardians and the student (Stone, 2017).

Summary

School counselors support best practice in suicide prevention to reduce suicide risk in children and adolescents and are part of a collaborative team who respond when students are identified as at-risk for suicide. When students are identified or are in crisis, school counselors support them by providing parents/guardians with appropriate information and referrals. School counselors are aware of the many legal and ethical implications associated with students who are contemplating suicide and adhere to them in their practice.

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The School Counselor and Supporting Students in Foster Care

(Adopted 2018)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors implement school counseling programs to meet the academic, career and social/emotional needs of all students. School counselors recognize that some students cope with situations that place them at higher risk. Youth in foster care represent an underserved and often-overlooked student population.

The Rationale

Children and youth in foster care represent one of the most vulnerable student subgroups in this country. Of the approximately 437,465 children in foster care in 2016, nearly 275,407 were in elementary and secondary schools (Children's Bureau, n.d.). Children in foster care experience much higher-levels of residential and school instability than their peers. Children experiencing this type of instability, including many students in foster care, are more likely to face a variety of academic difficulties (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016).

Research suggests that strong collaborative relationships between public schools and child welfare agencies improve the educational outcomes of students in the foster care system (Weinberg, Zetlin, & Shea, 2009; Zetlin, Weinberg, & Kimm, 2005; Zetlin, Weinberg, & Shea, 2006). It is imperative that professionals work together, along with the students' families when possible, to support each individual student and their unique needs.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors should inform themselves of the proper policies that apply to their states and local school districts regarding foster youth students' rights to school placements. School counselors should be knowledgeable about special circumstances and rights students may have in qualifying states and districts in which youth in foster care are able to receive their high school diploma with fewer credits or may qualify for a fifth year of high school if they changed school after their sophomore year. School counselors serve as the liaison between their school and child welfare agencies to promote communication and collaboration to address students' educational needs in their specific communities and improve students' educational outcomes.

In addition, school counselors:

- Help foster students with a stable school environment
- Bridge the communication between schools during times of transitions
- Promote resilience and identify protective factors
- Collaborate with foster/biological family and community stakeholders (e.g., social workers, therapists, attorneys and case managers)
- Display awareness of the challenges students face
- Inform themselves of resources available to help students access postsecondary training opportunities (e.g., current scholarships, grants and application fee waiver programs available to foster youth in their states)

Summary

School counselors recognize students in the foster care system are resilient, have many strengths and may require additional support in obtaining resources, social/emotional care, academic planning and college/career guidance. School counselors recognize it is their duty to be knowledgeable about legislation, resources and needs for students in foster care.

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The School Counselor and Test Preparation Programs

(Adopted 1989; revised 1993, 1999, 2001, 2006, 2012, 2018)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors understand the impact of testing and test scores on college admissions, industry credentialing and other areas pertaining to students' postsecondary plans and goals. School counselors assist students in preparing for standardized tests by promoting opportunities designed to increase knowledge and improve test-taking skills. School counselors help students and their families become knowledgeable about test preparation programs and assist them as they decide which programs best meet their needs.

The Rationale

Students are often apprehensive about standardized tests and sometimes view tests as intimidating or threatening. Compounding these feelings is the fact that, since 1990, average increases in first-time college applications has increased yearly, while the number of students being accepted to college has remained relatively stable (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2015). Research has demonstrated that markers predicting college success occur across a student's development and include reading proficiency by third grade, sound school attendance, positive social skills, rigorous course-taking pathways and maintenance of a 3.0 GPA or higher (College and Career Readiness & Success Center, 2013).

Although many postsecondary institutions require applicants to take a college entrance test to be considered for admission and/or placement, not all schools do. School counselors recognize that test-taking strategies for standardized tests are test-specific and will not necessarily be applicable to all standardized tests or other assessments students would take during their academic career. Even so, school counselors are often asked for advice on test preparation programs to increase scores and opportunities.

Research on test-taking and test-wise strategies, such as time-use and guessing strategies, revealed that such preparation can improve scores. These gains are even larger when a student participates in a longer test preparation program that allows the student to practice and develop broader cognitive skills (Plakans & Gebril, 2015). Many students benefit from becoming familiar with the test format and test-taking strategies before taking a standardized test. Content area review and repeated test-based practice have shown to be beneficial for students as they prepare for exams (Turner, 2009).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors provide test-taking strategies as a part of a school counseling program promoting academic, career and social/emotional development of all students. Test-taking skills and strategies include:

- Time use
- Error avoidance and guessing
- Memory and recall techniques
- Deductive reasoning
- Test-wiseness (including scoring rubrics, test format and item formats)
- Stress management and anxiety reduction (Selend, 2012)

School counselors collaborate with teachers and other school staff to coordinate and provide information on integrating test-taking strategies, content and practice tests into regular classroom instruction. Examples include providing students and families with research and information on a variety of test preparation options to enable them to make informed decisions about commercial test preparation programs, free programs, tutoring and other options. The school counselor collaborates with staff to encourage integration of test-taking strategies and content across the curriculum.

Summary

Research shows test preparation can help students improve test scores (What Works Clearinghouse, 2016). School counselors collaborate with school staff to assist students as they prepare for tests by providing instruction on test-taking skills and research and information about test preparation programs to students and their families.

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The School Counselor and Transgender and Nonbinary Youth

(Adopted 2016; Revised 2022)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors work to safeguard the well-being of transgender and nonbinary youth. School counselors recognize all students have the right to be treated equally and fairly, with dignity and respect as unique individuals, free from discrimination, harassment and bullying based on their gender identity and gender expression.

The Rationale

School counselors are committed to all students' academic, career and social/emotional development, regardless of gender identity, gender expression and gender attribution (GLSEN, 2022b). Transgender and nonbinary students and their families face increased risks as well as unique circumstances that often require additional support and recommendations to help ensure these students receive the same educational opportunities as their peers (Kosciw et al., 2020). Research shows 83.3% of transgender and 68.7% of nonbinary youth reported being victimized at school due to their gender (Kosciw et al., 2020),

The adverse health and educational consequences for transgender and nonbinary students are even greater than those for lesbian, gay and bisexual students. Students with supportive adults in their building are less likely to feel unsafe or to miss school and more likely to have higher GPAs, to pursue postsecondary education and to feel a higher sense of belonging in school (GLSEN 2022c). School counselors recognize the overall goal is to ensure the safety, comfort and healthy development of all students, maximizing inclusion and social integration while minimizing exclusion and stigmatization.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors recognize the responsibility for determining a student's gender identity rests with the student rather than outside confirmation from medical practitioners, mental health professionals or documentation of legal changes. School counselors collaborate with other school personnel to address district operations, programs, policies and activities that may put the well-being of transgender and nonbinary youth at risk. Although the guidelines within this statement provide important suggestions, they cannot anticipate every situation that might occur.

Each student's unique situation should be addressed on a case-by-case basis, using a student-centered approach that includes ongoing student and parent/guardian engagement (as appropriate) and school personnel with a legitimate educational interest per the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Title IX guidance and legal briefs issued by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) have defined fair and equal treatment for transgender and nonbinary students in relation to student names and pronouns, student records, privacy, restrooms, student safety and dress codes (OCR, 2021). School counselors promote the use of best practices to inform their support of transgender and nonbinary students, such as the following recommendations offered by the National Center for Transgender Equality (2021):

- **Names and pronouns:** School staff should address students by their chosen/affirmed name and pronouns corresponding to their gender identity, regardless of whether there has been a legal name change.
- **Student records:** Schools should make every effort to use students' chosen/affirmed names on student records, even if a legal name change has not been made. This includes making changes in the school's student information system, so the affirmed name is the one that appears on most printed unofficial materials (e.g., rosters, diplomas, student IDs, yearbooks, school newspapers, etc.) while the legal name is kept in a segregated, confidential file. If students have not disclosed their gender identity to a parent or guardian and as a result their name and/or gender marker cannot be changed on their student records, their chosen/affirmed name should be noted as a "preferred name" in the system. This affirmed name should be used by staff and peers, according to the transgender or nonbinary student's wishes. Attendance rosters and ID cards should reflect the student's wishes regarding name and/or gender marker/pronouns, regardless of recorded name and gender on student records. The legal name should be used only where specifically required. Districts and schools should determine which uses require the legal name, including whether it is required for specific testing or reporting purposes (GLSEN & NCTE, 2020).

- **Restrooms and locker rooms:** Students have the right to use restrooms and locker rooms matching their gender identity. Schools should work with transgender and nonbinary students to ensure they feel safe and can use the selected facilities with dignity. Upon request from any student requesting additional privacy, schools should provide alternatives such as single-user bathrooms and curtains or stalls in changing areas.
- **Dress code:** Schools have the right to implement a dress code as long as it does not discriminate against students based on gender identity, including by prohibiting some students from wearing attire that is approved for use by other students. Students have the right to express their gender while complying with the dress code, and the dress code must be equally enforced among transgender, gender nonbinary and their cisgender peers.

GLSEN offers additional guidance (2022a):

- **Physical education classes and intramural sports:** Students should be allowed to participate in physical education classes and intramural sports aligned with their gender identity.
- **Interscholastic sports:** Students should be allowed to participate in interscholastic sports aligned with their gender identity.
- **Gender-based activities or practices:** Gender-based programs in school districts should be evaluated to ensure they are offered with students' best interests in mind and have a clear, educational purpose. Students should be allowed to participate in these programs in accordance with their gender identity. Policies regarding overnight accommodations should be made well in advance to ensure solutions are developed that are respectful, inclusive and allow for transgender and nonbinary youth to fully participate with no additional burdens compared with their cisgender peers.

Summary

School counselors promote affirmation, respect and equal opportunity for all individuals regardless of gender identity or gender expression. School counselors encourage a safe and affirming school environment and promote awareness of and education on issues related to transgender and nonbinary students.

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The School Counselor and Trauma-Informed Practice

(Adopted 2016; Revised 2022)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors understand the impact adverse childhood experiences have on students' academic achievement and social/emotional development. Through the implementation of a school counseling program, school counselors strive to identify, support and promote the success of students who have experienced trauma.

The Rationale

Schools are increasingly recognizing the lasting negative impact on children exposed to traumatic events (Davis, et al., 2022). Children's trauma exposure, either as direct victims or as witnesses, can lead to social/emotional harm that manifests in negative ways in schools, including low academic performance, maladaptive behavior, lack of attention and focus, and an increase in absenteeism and drop-out rates (Rumsey & Milsom, 2019).

A trauma-sensitive school is one in which all students feel safe, welcomed and supported (Cole et al., 2013). Establishing a trauma-informed school counseling program paired with a multitiered system of supports (MTSS) and a preventive focus can decrease the effects of trauma exposure (Davis, et al., 2022; Martinez et al., 2020; and Rumsey & Milsom, 2019). The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014) describes four characteristics of a trauma-informed program or system:

- realizes the impact of trauma and understands the potential for recovery
- recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in system members
- responds by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures and practices
- actively resists re-traumatization

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors can be key players in promoting a trauma-sensitive environment in their schools, as they are in a unique position to identify students affected by traumatic events and provide the support and resources these students need. School counselors implementing a school counseling program addressing academic, career and social/emotional development can have a positive impact at all levels of education.

To promote students' physical, emotional and mental health and to create conditions allowing students to thrive and succeed, school counselors:

- recognize the signs of trauma in students
- understand traumas need not predict individual failure if sufficient focus on resilience and strengths is present
- increase and maintain knowledge of current best practices to avoid re-traumatizing students
- create connected communities and positive school climates that are trauma-sensitive to keep students healthy, in school and involved in positive social networks
- support the implementation of effective academic and behavioral practices, such as positive behavioral interventions and supports, restorative approaches to discipline and social/emotional learning
- promote safe, stable and nurturing relationships.
- provide community resource information to students and families dealing with trauma
- educate staff on the effects of trauma and how to refer students to the school counselor
- collaborate with community resources to provide support for students
- promote a trauma-sensitive framework for policies, procedures and behaviors to entire staff
- recognize the role technology can play in magnifying trauma incidents for students

Summary

A trauma-sensitive school is one in which all students feel safe, welcomed and supported. School counselors, collaborating with school staff and community partners, can help transform the school into a safe, supportive, trauma-sensitive learning environment for all students. School counselors advocate for policies and procedures focused on the trauma-sensitive framework and the establishment of a safe school climate for all students.

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The School Counselor and Universal Screening

(Adopted 2023)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Universal screening provides invaluable data to multidisciplinary teams, including school counselors, as they identify student needs and match them to interventions within a multitiered, multidisciplinary system of supports (MTSS). Universal screening must be carried out in an ethical manner that complies with federal and state laws and school district policies.

The Rationale

Universal screening in schools is defined as a preventive, systematic method for gathering data about the academic, social/emotional, and behavioral well-being and the mental health indicators of a given population (Donohue et al., 2018). As part of a multidisciplinary team, school counselors use data from universal screeners as a tool to proactively identify and address students' academic, career, and social/emotional needs within an MTSS framework (ASCA, 2021; Goodman-Scott, et al., 2023).

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors collaborate with other school leaders to develop and implement an MTSS framework that helps identify and meet students' academic, career, social/emotional and mental health needs. An integral element of MTSS is examining system wide results of universal screeners to improve the school counseling program, tiered interventions and supports for all students. In addition, school counselors leverage their shared leadership, knowledge, skills, and awareness to respond to students' individual needs identified through universal screeners (Donohue et al., 2018).

School counselors follow ethical standards, federal and state laws, and district policies regarding the use of universal screeners. The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) requires schools to obtain active consent from parents/guardians when requiring student surveys about eight protected areas, including mental or psychological problems of students or their families, sex behaviors or attitudes, and income (ASCA, 2022; USED, 2022). Questions about these types of information are often included in universal screeners.

Surveys administered by the school or district that are voluntary only require passive consent. "Passive consent" requires parents/guardians to be notified via U.S. mail or email about the survey and given the option of opting their student out of participation in the survey. Needs assessments and universal screeners that gather information by reviewing existing data or input from teachers and other educators do not require consent. According to the U.S. Department of Education, if a student is required to complete a survey and/or the survey is funded by the U.S. Department of Education or other federal agency, active consent is required. "Active consent" means that a parent/guardian must provide written, signed, and dated consent for the student to participate in the screening or survey process (USDE, 2020).

States may extend additional privacy protection beyond federal laws but cannot take away protection given to students and parents under federal law (Stone, 2022). School counselors must make themselves aware of their state statutes to ensure compliance.

School counselors ensure that a universal screener is valid, reliable, culturally sensitive, developmentally appropriate, and has been normed on a similar population (ASCA, 2022). School counselors ensure that any identified concerns are responded to in a timely manner with appropriate support services and community agencies. When necessary, school counselors collaborate with school staff and families to assist students in crisis. During and after the screening process, school counselors work with their multidisciplinary teams to:

- Communicate any identified concerns, results and appropriate resources to parents/guardians in a timely, culturally sensitivity manner.
- Use and allocate appropriate resources to support identified students and improve tiered instruction and supports
- Analyze results to implement classroom lessons about student mental, social/emotional and physical well-being and advocate for changes within the school to promote equitable access to needed resources and the mindsets and behaviors students need to be successful

- Use multiple data points, both quantitative and qualitative whenever possible, to provide students and families with complete and accurate information to promote students' well-being
- Store results in a confidential, secure manner and purge results appropriately (White and Kelly, 2010; ASCA, 2022)

Summary

School counselors recognize the benefits and legal/ethical considerations of universal screeners. Through implementation of universal screeners, school counselors gather data in a systematic, proactive manner that can be used to identify students who may benefit from academic and/or social/emotional supports and advocate for systemic practices that help all students succeed.

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The School Counselor and the Use of Non-School-Counseling Credentialed Personnel in Implementing School Counseling Programs

(Adopted 1994, Revised 2000, 2006, 2012, 2018)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors and the school counseling programs they design and implement serve a vital role in maximizing student success (Dimmit & Wilkerson, 2012; Olsen, Parikh-Fox, Flowers, & Algozzine, 2017; Wilkerson, Perusse, & Hughes, 2013). School counselors are uniquely qualified and solely eligible to meet the requirements of designing and implementing these programs. School counselors recognize that personnel who do not hold a master's degree in school counseling are not qualified to deliver a school counseling program that supports academic, career and social/emotional development and positively affects achievement for all students.

The Rationale

Research shows students who attend a school with a fully implemented school counseling program earn higher grades and are better prepared for life after high school (Carey & Dimmitt, 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Hoffman, 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Stephenson, 2012; Dimmit & Wilkerson, 2012; Stone & Dahir, 2015; Wood, Wilkerson, Perusse, & Hughes, 2013). School counselors recognize students face many challenges that may place them at risk for school failure. Communities and school districts across the country are seeking solutions to these complex challenges and may establish a variety of positions to address student needs.

School districts work diligently to employ the most highly trained personnel for dealing with these issues and may employ non-school-counseling credentialed staff for specific functions. Although non-school-counseling credentialed staff members provide valuable services to students, they do not have the training or skills to design or implement a school counseling program nor are they qualified to be placed in the role of school counselor. Non-school-counseling credentialed staff may include, but are not limited to, the following jobs:

- paraprofessionals
- peer helpers
- volunteers
- clerical support staff
- student assistance team members
- social workers, psychologists
- nurses
- mentors
- mental health counselors including marriage and family counselors, social emotional coaches, and day treatment workers
- college or graduation coaches/academic advisors
- behavior support specialists
- deans/assistant deans of students

The services non-school-counseling credentialed personnel provide must be clearly defined based on the individual's training and skills. Without appropriate training and skills, individuals with the best of intentions may provide inappropriate responses or interventions to students that could jeopardize students' development and well-being.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors recognize student needs can best be met through the collaborative efforts of all school personnel (Auger, 2013; Bardhoshi, Duncan, & Erford, 2017). In situations in which non-school-counseling credentialed personnel are performing interventions or prevention activities, school counselors advocate these activities be limited to the scope of the individual's training and capabilities. The school counselor collaborates with administrators, teachers and staff to establish appropriate guidelines, responsibilities and supervision for non-school-counseling credentialed staff as well as the activities provided. To ensure integrity, school counselors and non-school-counseling credentialed personnel should be aware of who is claiming credit for services to avoid duplicated reports of service.

When referring students to non-school-counseling credential staff, school counselors inform students and families of these staff members' role within the school. The school counselor may also provide information related to the individual's education level and scope of practice.

Summary

School counselors play an important role in the academic, career and social/emotional development of all students. Non-school-counseling credentialed individuals do not have the training or skills to design or implement a school counseling program nor are they qualified to be placed in the role of the school counselor. School counselors collaborate with administrators, teachers and staff to establish appropriate guidelines and supervision of services provided by non-school-counseling credentialed personnel and make referrals to these individuals as appropriate for the student.

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California Department of Education: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/rh/counseffective.asp>

Center for School Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation:
https://www.counseling.org/PublicPolicy/PDF/Research_Support_School_Counseling-ACA-CSCORE_02-11.pdf

The Professional Counselor and Use of Support Staff in School Counseling Programs

(Adopted 1974; reviewed and reaffirmed 1980; revised 1986, 1993, 1999, 2001, 2008, 2013, 2019)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors understand the value added to a school counseling program through the effective use of support staff. Assistance from school counseling program support staff members allows school counselors to use their time more efficiently and use their professional expertise and leadership skills more effectively to meet student needs.

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, 2019). However, even though recent studies have demonstrated significant correlations between student achievement and student-to-school-counselor ratios (e.g., Gewertz, 2018), the national average ratio is 455-to-1 for the 2016–2017 school year. In addition, the ASCA National Model offers a framework for a school counseling program that includes testing coordination and clerical duties on its list of “inappropriate activities for school counselors” (ASCA, 2019).

According to Heitin (2013), school counseling program support staff provide a means to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the school counseling program by relieving school counselors of many inappropriate, although necessary, tasks such as maintaining clerical records and coordinating paperwork. Heitin added that school counseling program support staff members allow the school counselor to spend more time planning and delivering programs and activities requiring specialized skills and training.

The Role of Support Staff in School Counseling Programs

School counseling program support staff members may assist in a variety of areas, including: collecting and maintaining current student files, record keeping, clerical support, data entry, new student registration and many other activities, allowing the school counselor to concentrate on delivering the school counseling program.

The school counseling program support staff members should be sensitive to students' problems and needs and be knowledgeable of the role of the school counselor and the total school counseling program. School counseling program support staff members should maintain the highest level of confidentiality of student records and personal information. They should not involve themselves in situations that are more appropriately handled by the school counselor.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors may assist in the selection and professional development of school counseling program support staff, collaborate to outline processes and activities that best support the school counseling program and ensure the support staff understand the ethical standards required for the office (Atici, 2014). These activities may include providing appropriate, ongoing supervision of school counseling program support staff members and ensuring the support staff has initial training as well as the opportunity for ongoing professional development in areas of clerical training, human relations and multicultural competence, ethics, community resources and confidentiality with regard to student records. When the school counselor works effectively through collaboration with support staff, the efficacy of the school counselor is enhanced (Atici, 2014).

Summary

School counselors understand the value support staff members add to a school counseling program. School counseling support staff members provide a means to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of the school counseling program and allow the school counselors to spend more time planning and delivering a program that requires specialized skills and training. School counselors may be involved with the selection of support staff and collaborate with them to outline processes and activities that best support the school counseling program.

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The School Counselor and Virtual/Distance School Counseling

(Adopted 2017; revised 2023)

ASCA Position

School counselors working in a virtual setting provide a school counseling program with the same standards and adherence to ethics as school counselors in an in-person setting. In virtual environments, school counselors work collaboratively with school, family and community partners to ensure equity and access to opportunities that positively affect students' academic, career and social/emotional development.

The Rationale

Online learning is becoming increasingly relied upon in the United States as students ranging from kindergarten to the postsecondary level are enrolling in virtual schools and online distance-education programs via internet or web-based methods (Holmes & Kozlowski, 2016). The U.S. Department of Education defines virtual school as a “school that offers only [virtual] instruction in which students and teachers are separated by time and/or location, and interaction occurs via computers and/or telecommunications technologies. A virtual school generally does not have a physical facility that allows students to attend classes on site” (Keaton, 2021, para. 3).

Students can be involved in online programs, ranging from a part-time, hybrid model in which some components of their education are offered in an in-person environment and some in a fully digital environment, to fully online programs and degrees (Holmes & Kozlowski, 2016).

Students from diverse backgrounds enroll in virtual schools for various reasons. These reasons include:

- Dealing with mental health needs that require a smaller environment
- Being medically unable to attend a physical school
- Preferring a smaller class size or independent learning environment
- Experiencing bullying or other traumatic experiences in a traditional school setting
- Seeking a more rigorous school curriculum (i.e., gifted or accelerated courses)
- Needing more individualized instructional support
- Developing asynchronously, such as being accelerated in some courses and below grade level in others
- Participating in athletics or performing arts at the professional level

It is important to note that even when school counselors work within in-person settings, they may still need to implement virtual/distance/hybrid strategies and programs to deliver their school counseling program (Greenidge et al., 2023). For example, virtual/distance/hybrid activities are beneficial to connect with students and families during remote learning days or meet with students and families who are unable to access school counseling activities in person.

Due to the prevalence of online learning and the need to incorporate virtual/distance/hybrid activities into school counseling programs, it is necessary for school counselors to understand best practices for engaging in this work.

The School Counselor's Role

School counselors working with students in a virtual/distance/hybrid school counseling setting:

- Adhere to the same ethical guidelines as school counselors in an in-person setting
- Educate students about appropriate conduct in the online setting
- Facilitate classroom instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counseling sessions that foster academic, career and social/emotional development
- Recognize, acknowledge and problem-solve the challenges and limitations of virtual/distance/hybrid school counseling
- Implement procedures for students to follow in both emergency and non-emergency situations when the school counselor is not available
- Recognize and mitigate the limitation of confidentiality within virtual/distance/hybrid school counseling, which may include unintended viewers or recipients

- Inform both the student and families of the benefits and limitations of virtual/distance/hybrid school counseling
- Educate students on how to participate in the virtual school counseling relationship to minimize and prevent potential misunderstandings that could occur due to lack of verbal cues and inability to read body language or other visual cues that provide contextual meaning to the process and relationship
- Recognize the challenges in virtual/distance/hybrid settings of assisting students considering suicide, including but not identifying their physical location, keeping them engaged on the call or device, contacting their parents/guardians and getting help to their location

Summary

School counselors understand the expectations, benefits, and challenges of providing virtual/distance/hybrid school counseling services to students. This form of program delivery increases students' access to activities and enables school counselors to assist them with a variety of diverse and unique needs outside of the in-person environment.

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The School Counselor and Working with Students Experiencing Issues Surrounding Undocumented Status

(Adopted 2017; revised 2019)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors promote equal opportunity, a safe and nurturing environment and respect for all individuals regardless of citizenship status, including undocumented students and students with undocumented family members, understanding that this population faces a unique set of stressors. School counselors work to eliminate barriers that impede student development and achievement and are committed to the academic, career and social/emotional development of all students. “School counselors demonstrate their belief that all students have the ability to learn by advocating for an education system that provides optimal learning environments for all students” (ASCA, 2016, p. 1).

The Rationale

The 1982 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) prohibits states from denying undocumented children a public K–12 education. In ruling the court stated that to deny these students an education would create a “lifetime of hardship” for the student, and it would create a “permanent underclass” (Eusebio & Mendoza, 2015).

Educators are on the front lines of implementing Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Because of their unique position within a school, school counselors are able to support undocumented students by assisting these students in gathering documentation for DACA requests, advising them on the many academic, career and social/emotional opportunities made possible by DACA (Avila & Zellner, 2015).

A school counseling program is an integral component of the school’s academic mission. Comprehensive school counseling programs, informed by student data and based on standards in academic, career and social/emotional development, promote and enhance the learning process for all students. The ASCA National Model ensures equitable access to a rigorous education for all students. Undocumented students and students with undocumented family members deserve the same services as all other students but face social, financial and legal barriers. These students need support to feel safe, in addition to needing assistance to find funding for any postsecondary educational goals, due to lack of Title IV federal financial aid that is not available to undocumented student in the form of grants, student loans or work-study.

Many students experience stressors due to:

- separation from family
- cultural differences
- language barriers and interpretation for families
- anxiety, fear, grief and loss regarding family members’ detention and deportation
- caretaker roles for family members
- concerns about their futures
- understanding how to navigate college access and availability to them
- marginalization due to mixed cultures
- PTSD due to traumatic immigration events
- re-traumatization

Connecting with a school counselor will alleviate many of these stressors and fears, especially when individual counseling addresses the students’ concerns. Having access to a qualified school counselor builds a support system needed at any age and will enable students to develop goals for their futures and feel safe and connected to their communities. School counselors recognize these stressors can be alleviated by intervention from a school counselor.

The School Counselor’s Role

School counselors focus their skills, time and energy on direct and indirect services to all students, regardless of their citizenship, national origin, race, color, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status or any other demographics. School counselors participate as members of the educational team and use the skills of leadership, advocacy and collaboration to

promote systemic change as appropriate. Supporting all students with a variety of needs may include a diverse skill set, including knowledge about many legal factors affecting students.

“Undocumented youth, in particular, can experience high levels of acculturative stress from immigration-related issues such as separation from family and academic difficulties. The psychological costs of family separation, associated with the migration process and with U.S. immigration procedures such as detention and deportation, are well documented and, among children, may include symptoms of depression and anxiety” (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

The role of the school counselor includes:

- Advocating for the rights of all students, including undocumented students, by ensuring students are not barred from education based on foreign birth certificates, lack of a Social Security number or a home language other than English
- Working with other district personnel so any information collected is uniformly applied to all students and not used to discriminate or bar certain students’ access to education
- Supporting undocumented students by helping them gain access to an equitable education that meets their needs and prepares them for postsecondary access, if necessary (e.g., referrals for ELL services, special education services and medical treatment)
- Working with school and district personnel to promote awareness and to educate school counselors and school and district personnel, students, parents and the community on policy, procedures and rights of the students and their families and to eliminate discriminatory language and actions regarding these students and their families
- Supporting the family with information about educational access and rights
- Assisting students with seeking postsecondary goals, navigating college access and finding funding for their goals
- Working with community partners and leveraging resources to provide support in keeping families intact, if possible, while supporting students who are separated from a parent due to deportation
- Ensuring schools are a safe haven for undocumented students and will not divulge confidential information to any outside agencies without proper legal documentation
- Providing counseling intervention and social/emotional support for students affected by immigration stressors, including assessment of possible trauma that they may have experienced
- Keeping abreast of current policies and practices of postsecondary institutions regarding access for undocumented students
- Advocating against the practice of separating children from their families at U.S. borders (ASCA, 2018)
- Maintaining a database of community resources to support referrals in assisting families with various challenges related to issues surrounding undocumented status, including recovery associated with trauma resulting from separation

Summary

School counselors understand undocumented students 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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