

POSITION STATEMENTS
OF THE
AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

ATTENTION DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

Adopted 1994, Revised 2000

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors support the rights of students with a medical diagnosis of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) to receive multidisciplinary, multimodal and multifaceted treatment for symptoms and effects of ADHD. Professional school counselors are committed to facilitating and promoting the continuing development of each student through counseling programs within the schools. We recognize that an important aspect of development involves recognizing students diagnosed with medical, psychological, behavioral and/or social problems likely to affect their performance at school, home and in the community.

Rationale

ADHD is one of the most prevalent childhood and adolescence disorders, affecting from 5 percent to 10 percent of all school-age children who may be genetically predisposed to the disorder. ADHD is believed to be an imbalance of the neuro-chemicals that act as triggers, transmitters and receptors within the brain. It is not considered to be caused by brain damage, birth trauma, poor parenting, inadequate discipline, nutritional deficiencies, allergies or divorce. ADHD may severely affect family relations, cause problems with school staff, impede learning and academic achievements, interfere with peer relationships and contribute to a student's poor self-concept and low self-esteem. Students with ADHD will undergo pressures and stresses that go beyond those resulting from developmental stages.

Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional school counselor is aware of information regarding the learning and behavioral issues found in students with ADHD. The professional school counselor may participate in the implementation of the following activities: (1) serve on the school's multidisciplinary team actively involved in the multimodal or multifaceted delivery of interventions or services to the child/adolescent with ADHD; (2) serve as a consultant and resource to the parents, teachers and other school personnel on the characteristics and problems of students with ADHD; (3) serve in the capacity of providing regular feedback on the social and academic performance of the student with ADHD to the members of the multidisciplinary treatment team; (4) help staff design appropriate programs for students with ADHD that include opportunities for them to learn more appropriate social skills and self-management skills; (5) provide students with ADHD with activities to improve their self-esteem and self-concept and to encourage students to practice the skills learned in counseling sessions in external settings; (6) promote ADHD workshops for staff and support groups for parents and families with children with ADHD; and (7) serve as an advocate for students with ADHD in the community.

Summary

The attitude of counselors, parents, peers and other professionals toward students with ADHD may, in the long run, have more to do with success in treating these children than any other factor. The professional school counselor takes an active role in providing support and implementing services for students with ADHD. (Note: Additional information on Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder may be found in the DSM IV.)

CENSORSHIP

Adopted 1985; revised 1993, 1999, 2002

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is committed to the protection of the fundamental democratic rights guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution, including those provisions for free speech, free press and equal protection under the law, as well as those rights not enumerated but held by citizens in a democratic society. ASCA supports academic freedom in school counseling programs and supports the rights of students to receive services appropriate to their needs.

Rationale

Censorship activities imposed on schools have created a climate threatening the students' basic rights to question, deal with differences and learn to make rational, well-informed decisions. Censorship is defined as the denial of a student's basic right to receive any of the commonly recognized school counseling services offered by school counseling programs.

It is important to have a school climate that fosters, rather than threatens, students' basic rights to question, deal with differences, gather information and learn to make rational decisions through intellectual analysis and sound scholarship. Students should be provided with opportunities within the school climate to learn to exercise basic constitutional rights guaranteed to citizens in our society so that as adults they will be able to make informed decisions and exercise the rights and duties of citizenship in a democratic society. Such a belief requires students to be exposed to a diversity of viewpoints and ideas, a fundamental democratic right guaranteed in our Constitution's provision for free speech, free press and equal protection under the law.

Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors support academic freedom, access to information and the right to independent thought. Professional school counselors have an obligation to support the basic tenets of democracy. Professional school counselors also safeguard the students' rights to receive information and services appropriate to their needs as an integral part of the total school mission. ASCA encourages school counselors to take necessary actions to ensure students have access to appropriate services permitting maximum student achievement.

ASCA further recommends that counselors provide accessibility to a comprehensive collection of school counseling materials chosen in compliance with basic written selection criteria developed by the school district. ASCA recommends that counselors provide school counseling support for staff and activities for students that encourage growth and academic excellence as well as recognizing diversity among ideas and students, which contributes to the American heritage. ASCA supports providing data to the school staff and community regarding goals, objectives and evaluation of the counseling program to ensure implementation in accord with state and local school board policies.

Summary

In order for students to develop in a healthy manner and obtain the skills necessary for citizenship, they need to exist in a climate that fosters the ability to make informed decisions based upon independent inquiry and sound scholarship. Professional school counselors have a personal and professional obligation to support the basic tenets of democracy to help ensure information about -- and access to -- a range of developmentally appropriate school counseling programs for every student.

CHARACTER EDUCATION

Adopted 1998

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

ASCA endorses and supports character education in the schools. The professional school counselor needs to take an active role in initiating, facilitating and promoting character education programs in the school curriculum.

Rationale

Character education is the teaching of key social values, which enables students to become positive, self-directed adults and responsible members of society. These social values are held by our society as ethical standards that support our democratic way of life. As professional school counselors, we know students need to acquire certain character traits based on clearly understood, universal values. These include: honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. These values affirm basic human worth and dignity.

Today, the family faces many obstacles and burdens. Standards of right and wrong have declined. Our nation's moral fiber is at risk. Each day our children make decisions about lying and cheating, using drugs or alcohol, becoming involved with guns and gangs.

We want our youth to acquire the knowledge, the self-esteem and the support they will need to survive in a changing society. Counselors can be part of the school team inviting family and community involvement to define the values that will guide the school's character development values. The responsibility of teaching and instilling these values must now be shared by the school and the home.

Professional School Counselor's Role

For character education to be effective, all adults in the school community need to model the behavior of good character they want students to imitate. The daily operations of school have significant impact on what children will learn to value. The professional school counselor needs to lead, initiate, manage and support character education programs in the school. Counselors should encourage the following activities if not already in practice:

- Formulation or articulation of a school philosophy or mission statement
- Guidance in helping all students express clear academic and behavior goals
- A discipline policy that supports character goals
- Student participation in school activities
- Student participation in community service or school projects
- Programs to give students the opportunity to help other students
- Extracurricular activities to include the involvement of students, school staff, parents and community members
- Teaching of making decisions, resolving conflicts and solving problems
- Student involvement in development of school rules
- Inclusion of character values in multicultural discussions
- Student recognition programs focused on character values

The professional school counselor is in a position to be effective in designing, initiating and supporting a character education curriculum. Teachers, counselors and administrators need to work together to teach students to take responsibility for their actions and behavior. A positive self-esteem and effective decision-making skills are essential to this process.

Summary

Character education will assist students in becoming positive and self-directed in their lives and education and in striving toward future goals. The professional school counselor, as a part of the school community and as a highly resourceful person, takes an active role by working cooperatively with the teachers and administration in providing character education in the schools as an integral part of the school curriculum and activities.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PREVENTION

Adopted 1981; revised 1985, 1993, 1999, 2003

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

It is the professional school counselor's legal, ethical and moral responsibility to report suspected cases of child abuse/neglect to the proper authorities. Recognizing that the abuse of children is not limited to the home and that corporal punishment by school authorities might well be considered child abuse, ASCA supports any legislation that specifically bans the use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary tool within the schools.

Rationale

The incidence of reported child abuse and child neglect has increased significantly during the past several years. Although there are societal beliefs and values that parents have the right to discipline their children as they choose, it becomes a public issue of child protection when that discipline becomes abusive. Research shows that a large percentage of abusive parents were abused children, perpetuating the cycle of abuse. The consequences of abuse and neglect may range from immediate physical and/or emotional harm, the inability to build healthy relationships, increased likelihood of being abused by another perpetrator or becoming an abuser and lowered self-worth.

Professional School Counselor's Role

Generally, state laws require people in the helping professions who have reasonable cause to believe a child is suffering physical or emotional injury to report this situation as directed by state law to the appropriate authorities. Professional school counselors are mandated reporters and need policies, referral procedures and essential knowledge. It is a legal, moral and ethical responsibility to report child abuse. Some states additionally require the reporting of domestic violence.

ASCA recognizes it is the absolute responsibility of professional school counselors to report suspected cases of child abuse/neglect to the proper authorities. Responsible action by the professional counselor can be achieved through the recognition and understanding of the problem, knowing the reporting procedures and participating in available child abuse information programs. Professional school counselors are instrumental in early detection of abuse. The association also recognizes that the abuse of children is not limited to the home and that corporal punishment by school authorities can be considered child abuse.

Professional school counselors commit themselves to providing strategies to help break the cycle of child abuse. Professional school counselors can help children and adults cope with abusive behavior, facilitate behavioral changes and develop positive interpersonal relationships, which may reinforce appropriate parenting skills. Professional school counselors coordinate team efforts on behalf of the child, provide support to staff and other school personnel, work to re-establish trust and provide follow-up counseling or to refer to ongoing counseling services outside of the school community, provide developmental workshops and/or support groups enhancing parenting skills, and coordinate or provide programs and in-services designed to help prevent child abuse.

Summary

Professional school counselors are a key link in the child abuse prevention network. It is their responsibility to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. The professional school counselor must be able to guide and help abused and neglected students by providing appropriate services during crisis situations. By providing up-to-date information and intervention, the professional school counselor can sometimes facilitate a turning point in the life and behavior of an abusive family.

COLLEGE ENTRANCE TEST PREPARATION PROGRAMS

(Adopted 1989; revised 1993, 1999, 2001)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors help students and their families become aware of college entrance test preparation programs. It is the responsibility of the students and their families to make any decisions with respect to such programs.

Rationale

College admissions tests are often experienced as intimidating or threatening to students. In the wake of this pressure, college entrance test preparation, whether in the private or public sector, is a subject that schools and, in particular, professional school counselors must address. Most students benefit from becoming more familiar with the format, test-taking strategies, content area review and repeated test-based practice.

Professional School Counselor's Role

In a comprehensive school counseling program, the professional school counselor provides information and coordinates services for all students in the provision of supplemental study skills programs as well as academic and career development.

Summary

Professional school counselors collaborate with other school staff to assist students in preparation for college admissions tests. Advance preparation and repeated test-based practice is to the advantage of the students taking the tests. Students and their families must make the choice of what best meets their needs, particularly in regard to commercial test preparation programs.

COMPREHENSIVE CONFLICT-RESOLUTION PROGRAMS

Adopted 2000

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The professional school counselor recognizes the need for all students to have access to a conflict-resolution program that is part of a comprehensive developmental school counseling program. Such programs foster a positive campus climate and promote lifelong skills enabling individuals to resolve conflict in a positive manner. Comprehensive conflict-resolution programs combine peer mediation, the incorporation of conflict-resolution principles into the academic curriculum and the education of all members of the school community in applying methods for alleviating conflicts.

Rationale

Violence-reduction and conflict-management programs are integral to a safe school environment. A comprehensive conflict-resolution program's goal is to prevent violence and create an optimal learning environment free of discrimination resulting from differences in ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation or religious beliefs. These programs properly implemented by professional school counselors serve to reduce violence, lower tension and lessen anxiety among students, thereby increasing the opportunity for improved academic performance, positive social adjustment and increased attendance. Implementing a comprehensive conflict-resolution program empowers and encourages students to take personal and collective responsibility for their conduct and the climate of their campus.

Professional School Counselor's Role

It is the professional school counselor's role to provide leadership in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of school wide, comprehensive conflict-resolution programs utilizing both prevention and intervention strategies. The professional school counselor should ensure that the comprehensive conflict-resolution program includes prevention services, training, education in recognition of early warning signs, intervention services, crisis response and follow-up, community involvement, peer mediation programs and evaluation of program effectiveness.

Summary

A comprehensive conflict-resolution program promotes a safe school environment that permits optimal personal growth and learning. Through participation in a comprehensive conflict-resolution program, students learn skills that maximize their potential for reaching personal goals and success in school.

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAMS

Adopted 1988; revised 1993, 1997

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

ASCA endorses comprehensive school counseling programs that promote and enhance student learning. The program's focus is on the three broad and interrelated areas of student development: academic, career and personal/social development. Each encompasses a variety of desired student learning competencies, which forms the foundation of the developmental school counseling program. The professional school counselor uses a variety of activities and resources to promote the desired student development. Professional school counselor responsibilities include program organization, implementation and coordination.

Rationale

A comprehensive school counseling program is developmental in nature. It is systematic, sequential, clearly defined and accountable. The program's foundation is developmental psychology, educational philosophy and counseling methodology. Proactive and preventive in focus, the school counseling program is integral to the educational program. It assists students in acquiring and using lifelong skills through the development of academic, career, self-awareness and interpersonal communication skills. The goal of the comprehensive school counseling program is to provide all students with life success skills.

The school counseling program has characteristics similar to other educational programs, including a scope and sequence, student competencies or outcomes, activities and processes to assist students in achieving the outcomes, professionally credentialed personnel, materials and resources and national standards for evaluation.

We recognize that our educational system is being challenged by the increasing needs of today's students and society's rising expectations. Many of our children enter school with emotional, physical and interpersonal barriers to learning. Although comprehensive school counseling programs include necessary crisis-oriented responsive services, the emphasis is on developmental skill building for all students beginning when students enter school and continuing as they progress through the grades.

Effective school counseling programs are a collaborative effort between the counselor and other educators to create an environment promoting school success. Staff and counselors value and respond to the diversity and individual differences in our societies and communities. Comprehensive school counseling programs help ensure equal opportunities for all students to participate fully in the educational process.

This counseling model is compatible with the National Education Goals and the National Standards for School Counseling Programs.

Professional School Counselor's Role

Within a comprehensive school counseling program, professional school counselors will focus their skills, time and energy on direct service to students, staff and families. ASCA recommends a realistic counselor-student ratio to be 1:250. Professional school counselors will spend 70 percent of their time in direct service to students. Indirect services include counseling program planning, maintenance and evaluation; participation in school site planning and implementation;

partnerships and alliances with post-secondary institutions, businesses and community agencies; and other tasks enhancing the program's mission.

The comprehensive school counseling program balances many components. It requires counselors to deliver individual and small group counseling and large group guidance; to teach skill development in academic, career and personal/social areas; to provide consultation and case management; and to coordinate, manage and evaluate the school counseling program.

As student advocates, professional school counselors participate as members of the educational team. They consult and collaborate with teachers, administrators and families to help students be successful academically, vocationally and personally. Professional school counselors are indispensable partners with the instructional staff in the development of contributing members of society. They ensure, on behalf of students and their families, that all school programs facilitate the educational process and offer the opportunity for school success.

Summary

A written, comprehensive developmental and career K-12 guidance curriculum should be implemented in every school district. It should include a systematic and planned program delivery that productively involves all students and promotes and enhances the learning process. The comprehensive school counseling program facilitates student development in three areas:

- Academic development, which includes the acquisition of skills, attitudes and knowledge contributing to effective learning in school throughout the lifespan.
- Career development, which includes the foundation for the acquisition of skills, attitudes, and knowledge enabling students to make a successful transition from school to careers.
- Personal/social development, which includes the acquisition of skills, attitudes and knowledge to help students understand and respect self and others, acquire effective interpersonal skills, understand and practice safety and survival skills and develop into contributing members of society.

The comprehensive school counseling program should be supported by appropriate resources and implemented and coordinated by a credentialed professional school counselor

CONFIDENTIALITY

Adopted 1974; reviewed and reaffirmed 1980; revised 1986, 1993, 1999, 2002

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The professional responsibility of school counselors is to fully respect the right to privacy of those with whom they enter counseling relationships. Professional school counselors must keep abreast of and adhere to all laws, policies and ethical standards pertaining to confidentiality. This confidentiality must not be abridged by the counselor except when there is clear and present danger to the student and/or other persons.

Rationale

Confidentiality is an ethical term denoting a counseling practice relevant to privacy. Privileged communication is a legal term denoting a requirement to protect the privacy between counselor and student.

A student has the right to privacy and confidentiality. ASCA recognizes that a counseling relationship requires an atmosphere of trust and confidence between the student and the counselor. Confidentiality ensures that disclosures will not be divulged to others except when authorized by the student or when there is a clear and present danger to the student and/or to other persons.

ASCA members affirm their belief in the individual's worth and dignity. It is the professional responsibility of school counselors to fully respect the right to privacy of those with whom they enter counseling relationships.

Professional School Counselor's Role

Counselors have a responsibility to protect the privileged information received through confidential relationships with students, the students, parents or guardians, and with staff. The professional school counselor reserves the right to consult with other professionally competent persons when this is in the student's best interest. In the event of possible judicial proceedings, the professional school counselor should initially advise the school administration and the counselee, and if necessary, consult with legal counsel. If reports are required, every effort should be made to limit demands for information to those matters essential for the purpose of the legal proceedings. When a professional counselor is in doubt about what to release in a judicial proceeding, the professional school counselor should arrange a conference with the judge to explain the dilemma and get advice as to how to proceed. Counseling information used in research and counselor training should fully guarantee counselees' anonymity.

It is the counselor's responsibility to provide notice to students regarding the possible necessity for consulting with others. This confidentiality must not be abridged by the professional school counselor except where there is a clear and present danger to the student and/or to other persons.

The professional school counselor and student should be provided with adequate physical facilities to guarantee the confidentiality of the counseling relationship. With the enactment of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, P.L. 93-380 (The Buckley Amendment), great care should be taken with recorded information. All professional school counselors should have a copy of the complete law. Professional school counselors must adhere to P.L. 93-380; they

must be concerned about individuals who have access to confidential information. It should be each school's policy to guarantee adequate working space for secretaries so that students and school personnel will not come into contact with confidential information, even inadvertently. Professional school counselors should undertake a periodic review of information requested of their students. Only relevant information should be retained. Professional school counselors will adhere to ethical standards and local policies in relating student information over the telephone. They have a responsibility to encourage school administrators to develop written policies concerning the ethical and legal handling of all records in their school system. The development of additional guidelines relevant to the local situation is encouraged. Finally, it is strongly recommended that state and local counselor associations implement these principles and guidelines through appropriate legislation.

Professional school counselors should be aware that it is much more difficult to guarantee confidentiality in group counseling than in individual counseling. Communications made in good faith may be classified as privileged by the courts, and the communicating parties will be protected by law against legal action seeking damages for libel or slander. Generally, it may be said that an occasion of this particular privilege arises when one acts in the bona fide discharge of a public or private duty. This privilege may be abused or lost by malice, improper and unjustified motive, bad faith or excessive publication.

Summary

A counseling relationship requires an atmosphere of trust and confidence between student and counselor. A student has the right to privacy and confidentiality. The responsibility to protect confidentiality extends to the student's parent or guardian and staff in confidential relationships. Professional school counselors must adhere to P.L. 93-380.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN THE SCHOOLS

Adopted 1995, Revised 2000

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

It is ASCA's position that corporal punishment should be abolished in schools.

Rationale

Professional school counselors believe that corporal punishment teaches children violence is an acceptable way to resolve differences. In many states, children are the only individuals who officially may be punished, under law, by physical force. Corporal punishment seriously compromises self-esteem and contradicts the fundamental right of all children to be free from bodily pain and injury.

Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors have a responsibility to protect the students they serve and to promote the use of positive and effective disciplinary methods. Research shows physical punishment to be ineffective in teaching new behaviors and to be detrimental in teaching problem-solving methods. The professional school counselor acts as a resource person to school personnel for the implementation of effective intervention strategies that facilitate positive individual development.

It is school counselors' professional responsibility to actively influence public and legislative bodies to abolish corporal punishment in schools. Professional school counselors encourage public recognition of the consequences of corporal punishment, disseminate research on alternatives to corporal punishment and encourage legislation prohibiting continued use of corporal punishment in states where such use exists.

Summary

ASCA seeks the elimination of corporal punishment in schools. Professional school counselors promote understanding of and research on alternatives to corporal punishment, seek legislative solutions and advocate for the use of more effective and affirmative discipline methods.

CREDENTIALING AND LICENSURE

Adopted 1990; revised 1993, 1999, 2003

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

ASCA strongly supports passage of a professional school counselor credentialing law in each state providing legal definition of the counseling profession and of qualified practitioners and establishing standards for entry and role definition in school settings, including a privileged communication clause. ASCA strongly endorses and supports the school counselor standards developed by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and encourages all state education certification and/or licensure agencies to adopt these professional standards for school counselor credentialing. Further, ASCA supports the credentialing and employment of those who hold a master's degree in counseling-related fields with training in all areas specified by the CACREP standards. Any school internship shall be under the supervision of a credentialed and/or licensed school counselor and a university supervisor.

Rationale

Professional school counselor licensure legislation protects the public and its right to select which mental health specialty would best serve its needs. ASCA encourages legislation including a legal definition of the counseling profession, setting minimum standards for entry into the counseling profession and defining the role of professional school counseling. ASCA encourages insertion of a privileged communication clause for counselors in all settings and the inclusion of the ASCA Ethical Standards as part of said legislation. ASCA strongly supports the nationwide use of CACREP standards in establishing state certification guidelines for professional school counselors to ensure sound academic practicum and internship experience. This preparation and experience enhances the development of proactive and comprehensive school counseling programs.

Professional School Counselor's Role

The changing needs of students, families and schools require professional school counselors who are skilled in current counseling techniques focusing on students' academic, career and personal/social needs. School counselors must also possess skills in the development, implementation and evaluation of professional school counseling programs, as well as an ability to work in collaboration and consultation with others in the school and community.

Summary

ASCA, recognizing the ever-changing needs of students, families, schools and communities, strongly supports sound academic preparation and the use of CACREP standards in establishing state certification guidelines for professional school counselors. ASCA further supports licensure for all specialties within the counseling profession in all states.

CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE IN THE SCHOOLS

Adopted 2000

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The professional school counselor is a pivotal member of a school district's critical incident response team. The professional school counselor is a leader in the successful implementation of a response plan during any school-related incidents and serves primarily as an advocate for students' safety and well-being.

Rationale

ASCA promotes and supports a safe, violence-free learning environment in the schools. Professional school counselors are critical to the following emergency prevention/preparedness response activities: direct student counseling services, student suicide prevention, drug and alcohol interventions, student safety advocacy, parent education programs, and response team planning and drill practices. It is imperative that school districts develop district-level and building-level emergency preparedness and response plans. Accurate and immediate implementation of a critical incident response plan can significantly protect and ensure students' safety during a critical event and mitigate the long-term effects following the event. Professional school counselors screen students for unhealthy or unsafe coping responses to current or past tragedies and make appropriate referrals. Professional school counselors provide critical incident stress debriefing.

Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors support and actively engage themselves in critical incident response in the schools. The professional school counselor is a leader and an integral part of the prevention, intervention and post-incident support of school critical incident responses in both the planning and implementation. As a member of the district and school critical incident response team, the professional school counselor is familiar with the school community, including students, parents and school staff members. The professional school counselor is familiar with first responders such as law enforcement officials or emergency medical responders and with agency counseling service providers in the community.

The professional school counselor's central role is to respond to and advocate for the emotional needs of all persons affected by the crisis. The professional school counselor recognizes and facilitates a continuum of support for students and victims affected by a crisis. The professional school counselor is skilled in networking with community resources and thus is able to provide effective planning and referral for victims of a critical incident. In the event of a critical incident, the professional school counselor's primary role is to provide direct counseling service during and after the incident.

Summary

The professional school counselor is a leader and a crucial member of a district and school critical incident response team. The development and implementation of a coordinated district and school critical incident response plan should include input from the professional school counselor. Professional school counselors are student advocates and facilitators of communication with students, staff, parents and community and assist in securing outside services when needed. The counselor's expertise should not be replaced by less-qualified

personnel in critical incident response planning and implementation. The professional school counselor should help coordinate critical incident stress debriefing for students, staff and counselors directly involved in the incident response.

CROSS/MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING

Adopted 1988; revised 1993, 1999

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

School counselors take action to ensure students of culturally diverse backgrounds have access to appropriate services and opportunities promoting the individual's maximum development.

Rationale

Cross/multicultural counseling is the facilitation of human development through the understanding and appreciation of cultural diversities. ASCA recognizes cultural diversities as important factors deserving increased awareness and understanding on the part of all school personnel, especially the school counselor. Counselors may use a variety of strategies not only to increase the sensitivity of students and parents to culturally diverse persons and enhance the total school and community environment but also to increase awareness of culturally diverse populations.

Professional School Counselor's Role

ASCA encourages school counselors to take action to ensure students of culturally diverse backgrounds have access to appropriate services and opportunities promoting maximum development. Professional school counselors use a variety of strategies to increase sensitivity of students and parents to cultural diversity and to enhance the total school and community climate, as well as to increase awareness of culturally diverse persons and populations. Counselors have the skills necessary to consult with school personnel to identify alienating factors in attitudes and policies impeding the learning process of culturally diverse students. School counselors need to continue to be aware of and strive to ensure that all students' rights are respected. This allows them to maximize their potential in an environment supporting and encouraging the person's growth and development. School counselors have the responsibility of ensuring all students' specific needs are met.

Summary

Professional school counselors have the responsibility of ensuring all students' special needs are met. Counselors have the skills necessary to consult with school personnel to identify alienating factors in attitudes and policies impeding the learning process and the skills necessary to foster increased awareness and understanding of cultural diversity existing in the school and community. ASCA encourages professional school counselors to use a variety of strategies, activities and resources personally, in school, through community outreach, with students, staff and parents, and within the school districts, to increase awareness and understanding of culturally diverse persons and populations and to enhance the total school and community environment and climate. School counselors need to continually be aware of and strive to ensure all students have the right to maximize their potential in an environment supporting and encouraging a person's growth and development.

DISCIPLINE

Adopted 1989; revised 1993, 1999, 2001

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The professional school counselor works with school system personnel and other stakeholders to establish and maintain policies that encourage appropriate behavior so that schools can be a safe place where teaching and learning can be effectively accomplished. Such policies promote the use of the school counselor as a resource person with expertise in the area of discipline plan development for prevention and intervention not as a disciplinarian.

Rationale

School discipline is one of the most serious, ongoing problems confronting school systems today. Contemporary discipline plans take a developmental approach in stressing that students are responsible for controlling their own behavior. All professional staff members need to be actively committed and involved in the development, implementation and maintenance of an effective school wide discipline plan, which has as its primary goal, making schools safe and respectful learning environment.

Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional school counselor is increasingly being called upon to act as mediator in teacher-student conflicts and in student-student conflict situations. The professional school counselor is also called upon as a support and resource for parents.

The professional school counselor plays a participatory role in the developmental aspects of discipline programs, within state regulations. It is not the role of the professional school counselor to mete out punishment but to help create effective behavior change. The professional school counselor acts as a liaison, representative and mediator to help create effective learning environment, keeping in mind students' the diverse cultural, developmental and emotional needs individual needs.

Summary

The professional school counselor's role in the disciplinary referral process must be clearly delineated by district administrative policy. Such policy needs to describe the ability and limits of the professional school counselor's involvement in disciplinary action. The professional school counselor should be, by policy, perceived by all as a neutral and resourceful mediator of those involved in conflict resolution. It is not the professional school counselor's role to serve as an enforcement agent but rather a significant contributor to the development of the prevention and intervention plans through which problem student behaviors are managed and positive student behaviors are nurtured.

DROPOUT PREVENTION/STUDENTS-AT-RISK

Adopted 1989-90; revised 1993, 1999

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors at all levels make a significant, vital and indispensable contribution toward the mental wellness of "at-risk" students. School counselors work as a member of a team with other student service professionals including social workers, psychologists and nurses, in liaison with staff and parents, to provide comprehensive developmental counseling programs for all students including those identified as being potential dropouts or at-risk.

Rationale

There are probably as many definitions of the "at-risk" student as there are school districts. Any student may at any time be at risk with respect to dropping out of school, becoming truant, performing below academic potential, contemplating suicide or using drugs. The underlying reasons for these behaviors often deal with personal and social concerns such as poor self-esteem, family problems, unresolved grief, neglect or abuse. Students experiencing these concerns can be helped by professional school counselors. The decision to drop out of school can carry with it devastating lifelong implications. The school counselor, in conjunction with other school staff members, identifies potential dropouts and other students considered at risk and works closely with them to help them stay in school or find alternative means of completing their education.

Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional school counselor provides consultation in defining and identifying at-risk students. The goal is to identify and intervene before they move through a continuum of self-destructive behavior. The school counselor provides responsive programs, including short-term individual, group, family and crisis counseling; provides programs for individual planning to meet academic, educational and career counseling needs; provides curriculum programs to strengthen personal/interpersonal skills (choice, self-acceptance, feelings, beliefs and behaviors, problem-solving, decision-making); identifies suicidal students, counsels them and refers them to appropriate outside agencies; provides in-service support presentations to staff; provides referrals for additional specialized support services within the district and from other community resources; and provides consultation with and support for parents/guardians of at-risk students. The school counselor works as a member of a team with other student service professionals.

Summary

Professional school counselors work with other educators and community resources to provide early identification and intervention for potential dropouts and other students who may be considered at-risk through a comprehensive, developmental, K-12 counseling program.

EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

Adopted 1994, Revised 2000

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The professional school counselor works with administrative, curricular and instructional staff to ensure all students have the opportunity to design academically challenging programs of studies.

Rationale

Specialization within a student's program of studies should lead to successful completion of requirements for the chosen post-secondary option, while permitting opportunities for the development of other competencies. A systematic educational planning program promotes a student's opportunity to make individual choices geared to his or her unique profile of abilities, interests and goals. Lack of educational planning leads to inequities based on gender, stereotypical attitudes, and students' special needs.

Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors play a critical role in assisting students in the development of a comprehensive plan allowing for exploration of their educational and career opportunities. The professional school counselor possesses knowledge of national, state and local goals and programs identifying how students can best achieve success in their post-secondary plans.

The professional school counselor advocates for developmental guidance programs involving individual and group activities stressing educational planning (i.e. decision-making, career awareness and exploration). The professional school counselor educates parents to become active members of the decision-making team.

Collaboration within the education community is necessary to provide all students with better choices and opportunities for quality educational programs. The professional school counselor takes a proactive role in facilitating changes that afford students, parents and staff the opportunity to accurately assess student strengths, interests and preferences and encourages the selection of challenging educational programs.

Summary

The professional school counselor advocates for equal educational planning opportunities for all students. Decisions that a student makes about a chosen course of study must be based upon information unique to the individual and his or her profile of skills and knowledge.

EVALUATION

Adopted 1978; reaffirmed 1984; revised 1986, 1993; reviewed 1999

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Each professional school counselor shall have an annual evaluation. It is the association's position that evaluation shall be based upon criteria (standards and competencies related to the school counseling profession) that recognize the differences between evaluating professional school counselors and those used to evaluate administrative or classroom personnel and that conform to local and state regulations. The professional school counselor evaluation should accurately reflect the unique professional training and counselor responsibilities within the school counseling program. Basic professional school counselor standards and competencies need to be included in the evaluation.

Rationale

The primary purpose of the evaluation process is to ensure school counselors' quality, high-level performance and continued professional growth. ASCA is committed to ongoing and sustained improvement of the process. It is recommended that each professional school counselor be evaluated with regard to the implementation of the district's written counseling program and the professional school counselor job description. Both the district's plans on evaluating professional school counselors and the professional school counselor need to be evaluated and reviewed annually. These plans shall contain specified goals along with objectives emphasizing student outcomes; the goals should be collaboratively developed by both the professional school counselor and the supervisor. The written evaluation is a dynamic document, modified annually to reflect students' changing needs and the school counseling staff's improved skills. Professional school counselors are committed to the improvement of school counseling programs. ASCA welcomes the opportunity to aid local administrators, department heads and others charged with the improvement or development of evaluation instruments and procedures and endorses the use of guidelines set forth in the School Counselor Performance Standards of the ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs.

Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional school counselor provides information to supervising administration regarding approved standards and competencies for professional school counselors and school counseling programs. The professional school counselor works with administration to develop appropriate tools to use in the evaluation of the school counselor and the school's counseling program.

Summary

The professional school counselor is proactive in the evaluation process. Educating administration and staff regarding the school counselor's specialized training and skills and the role of the school counseling program in the educational process helps to define the professional school counselor's role. The professional school counselor's evaluation is based on that role. Criteria used in the evaluation process should reflect the standards and competencies of the professional school counselor.

FAMILY/PARENTING EDUCATION

Adopted 1989; revised 1993, 1999, 2003

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors assume a leadership role in the initiation, promotion and delivery of family/parenting education in the schools, recognizing diverse family structures.

Rationale

Family/parenting education is specialized instruction on the practices of childrearing. Trained group leaders provide instruction, strategies, guidance, consultation and referral resources to meet the parenting needs of the school community. The professional school counselor may be the trained group leader.

Family/parenting education programs work to improve parents' skills to effect behavioral changes in their children. Research findings indicate that school-sponsored parent education programs integrate home and school life. They provide families with a model of participation.

Professional School Counselor's Role

A pre-K-12 comprehensive school counseling program may include units for community-oriented family/parenting education programs. The family education activities will vary according to the participants' developmental levels, stages and needs. These programs can be provided to students as a component of the academic, career and personal/social guidance curriculum and to parents as a parenting workshop. Group approaches often are the preferred delivery means for developmental guidance activities in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. The goal of the parent workshop is to improve parenting skills, problem-solving and decision-making skills and to provide a "skill bank" of alternative coping skills. The professional school counselor is instrumental in providing educational materials and resources for parents.

Summary

Research indicates that school-sponsored family/parenting education integrates home and school life, providing families with a model of participation. The professional school counselor, as leader of the school counseling program, advocates for and provides family/parenting education to the school community.

GENDER EQUITY

Adopted 1983; revised 1993, 1999, 2002

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

ASCA members are committed to facilitating and promoting the fullest possible development of each individual by reducing barriers of race, gender, ethnicity, age or handicap and by providing equal opportunity and equal status for all genders. ASCA is committed to the use of inclusive language and positive modeling of gender equity.

Rationale

Many internal and external obstacles exist in school and society inhibiting students from developing their full potential (e.g., gender-role stereotyping and socialization, tracking systems). To expand the range of options available to students, it is important that school counselors become acutely aware of ways in which communications affect opportunities on the basis of gender. Some of the ways in which barriers are maintained or broken down are through language, organizational structures, leader selection, expectations of individual students and activities implementation.

This position statement focuses primarily on equal opportunity and status irrespective of gender and expands the range of opportunities available to students. Many federal and state laws have been passed protecting individuals from sex and race discrimination in education and work (e.g., the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Vocational Amendments of 1976, the Women's Educational Equity Act of 1974, Affirmative Action and Executive Orders, and Title IX). These important legal mandates ensure equal treatment under the law but do not necessarily change ingrained attitudes and behaviors.

Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional school counselor uses inclusive language and equitable expectations toward students. Professional school counselors are sensitive to those aspects of interpersonal communication and organization that provide working models of gender equity and equality. They may also promote gender equity through large and small group presentations. Professional school counselors must become vigilant as to the pervasive negative effects of stereotyping gender-role expectations. The professional school counselor becomes sensitive to ways in which interpersonal attitudes and behaviors can have negative effects on others and provides constructive feedback on negative and positive use of inclusive language and organizational structure. The professional school counselor emphasizes a person's competence and not his or her appearance. When planning activities, equal representation of genders in visible leadership positions as well as other role positions demonstrates gender equity.

Summary

ASCA is committed to equity. ASCA supports consciousness-raising among professional school counselors including modeling of inclusive language and equal opportunity for everyone in order to break through stereotypical behaviors and expectations.

GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENT PROGRAMS

Adopted 1988; revised 1993, 1999, 2001

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The professional school counselor assists in providing technical assistance and an organized support system within the developmental comprehensive school counseling program for gifted and talented students to meet their extensive and diverse needs as well as the needs of all students.

Rationale

An organized support system throughout the formative years is imperative for such students to be able to realize their potential. A part of this support system is participation in a school counseling program that meets the extensive and diverse needs of the gifted and talented students.

Professional School Counselor's Role

The role of the professional school counselor in gifted and talented programs may be as follows:

1. Assisting in the identification of gifted and talented students through the use of a multiple criterion system utilized in their school district, which may include:
 - Intellectual ability
 - Academic performance
 - Visual and performing arts ability
 - Practical arts ability
 - Creative thinking ability
 - Leadership potential
 - Parent, teacher, peer nomination
 - Expert evaluation
2. Advocating for the inclusion of activities that effectively address the personal/social, and career development needs, in addition to the academic needs of identified gifted and talented students
3. Assisting in promoting understanding and awareness of the special issues that may affect gifted and talented students including:
 - Underachievement
 - Perfectionism
 - Depression
 - Dropping out
 - Delinquency
 - Difficulty in peer relationships
 - Career development
 - Meeting expectations
 - Goal setting
 - Questioning others' values
4. Providing individual and group counseling for gifted and talented students, as warranted.

5. Recommending material and resources for gifted and talented programs and teachers and parents of gifted and talented students.
6. Engaging in professional development activities through which knowledge and skills in the area of programming for the needs of the gifted and talented are regularly upgraded.

Summary

Gifted and talented students come from many backgrounds, and their special abilities cover a wide spectrum of human potential. Specifically planned educational experiences can greatly enhance the continued development of gifted and talented persons. Professional school counselors work in a collaboration with other school personnel to maximize opportunities for these students. The professional school counselor is an integral part of the educational team that delivers a comprehensive school counseling program to meet the needs of all students.

GROUP COUNSELING

Adopted 1989; revised 1993, 2002; reviewed 1999

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Every school district and every institution of higher learning should include and support the group counseling concept as an integral part of a comprehensive developmental school counseling program.

Rationale

Group counseling, which involves a number of students working on shared tasks and developing supportive relationships in a group setting, is an efficient and positive way of dealing with students' developmental problems and situational concerns.

By allowing individuals to develop insights into themselves and others, group counseling makes it possible for more people to achieve a healthier personal adjustment, handle the stresses of a rapidly changing technological and complex environment and learn to work and live with others.

Professional School Counselor's Role

Many components of a comprehensive school counseling program are best delivered by means of group counseling. Small- and large-group approaches are the preferred medium of delivery for developmental counseling program activities, in terms of efficiency as well as effectiveness. Professional school counselors facilitate many groups, as well as train others as group facilitators. Such groups might include the parent education group, the peer helpers group or in-school support groups for students. The counselor may be involved in groups specific to a particular community/school district.

Summary

Group counseling is an efficient and positive delivery medium to meet students' developmental needs and situational concerns. Groups and group counseling make it possible for students to achieve healthier personal adjustment in the face of rapid change and to learn to work and live with others. Groups are an integral part of a comprehensive school counseling program and should be included and supported by every educational institution.

HIGH STAKES TESTING

Adopted 2002

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recognizes the use of standardized testing as one in a range of measures used to assess student performance and learning. ASCA recommends the use of multiple criteria and opposes the use of a single test to make important educational decisions affecting students and their schools.

Rationale

High-stakes testing refers to any standardized assessment that uses resulting scores to generate consequences determining the educational direction for students, educators, schools, and communities. Important consequences for students might include decisions affecting an individual student's career choices and educational opportunities such as academic placement, promotion and graduation. Resultant scores from high-stakes tests use inferred information as data to improve the quality of education through added or reduced funding, adjustment of curriculum and alteration of teacher certification standards. High-stakes tests can penalize schools and students for factors over which they have no control such as socioeconomic influences, naturally occurring yearly fluctuations or a student's state of readiness to perform on the day of the test. The scores resulting from high-stakes tests do not take into account important factors such as a school's adequacy of educational funding, lack of standardization of the test's administration, interpretation and scoring, potential errors in scoring or barriers to student performance. The testing results do not necessarily indicate student learning. Life-changing decisions may be based on the results of a single score.

The pressure to perform and the anxiety related to these tests in many cases are developmentally inappropriate and unhealthy for young children and may be for older students. Yearly administration of such tests may affect student achievement by promoting a negative attitude toward education and learning and may also affect student performance on other authentic measures of assessment.

Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional school counselor's role is to adhere to professional standards regarding assessment measures and to provide explanations as to the nature, purpose and results of the assessment. The professional school counselor appropriately uses assessment results and takes reasonable steps to prevent others from misusing the information. The professional school counselor uses caution when making evaluations and interpreting the performance of populations not represented in the norm group on which an evaluation instrument is normed or on criteria not represented in the assessment.

Summary

ASCA supports the use of standardized tests as one of many measures of students' and schools' achievement and success. ASCA rejects the use of high-stakes tests and/or the use of a single measurement instrument to identify student/school success. The professional school counselor encourages multiple measures when life-influencing decisions are being made.

HIV/AIDS

Adopted 1988; revised 1993, 1999, 2001

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The professional school counselor focuses on Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Disorder (HIV/AIDS) as a disease and not as a moral issue. The professional school counselor promotes prevention, health and education, while providing a vital link to the well being of students, staff, parents and the community.

Rationale

Federal laws, regulations and court cases do not permit discrimination on the basis of HIV status. Since 1981, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has prompted health education programs and preventative measures to reach vulnerable groups. Although HIV/AIDS information and education are vital for all individuals, professional school counselors communicate with these vulnerable populations. Adolescents and pre-adolescents are in stages in life when they are exploring their individual identity. School counselors have the opportunity and responsibility to provide students with accurate health information and to help them develop healthy attitudes and habits.

Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional school counselor's role is to provide counseling, support and collaboration with school health personnel to provide educational programs for students, staff, and parents. Clear, succinct and accurate information concerning HIV/AIDS, and any related complications, is vital to all persons.

The professional school counselor is familiar with the school policy regarding HIV and AIDS and the ramifications for the school population. The professional school counselor becomes familiar with current resources to assist students and families dealing with HIV/AIDS issues.

The professional school counselor may advocate for the initiation of an HIV/AIDS education program, and with the curriculum developed in conjunction with groups associated with the school and officially approved by the board of education. Specific elements may include general information about HIV/AIDS, including knowledge of the behavior choices that put people at risk for HIV/AIDS, how HIV/AIDS transmission occurs, HIV/AIDS-related civil rights issues, universal health precautions and accurate information dispelling myths about HIV/AIDS. The HIV/AIDS education program needs to include instruction for students, parents, and staff promoting concepts of healthy living and responsibility to self, family and society.

Summary

HIV/AIDS is a national concern for which each person must take personal responsibility. Through focusing on HIV/AIDS as a disease, it is possible to develop educational programs to help prevent the spread of the disease. Professional school counselors promote approaching the issue from a health and preventive model, keeping abreast of current recommendations and resources.

HOME SCHOOLING

Adopted 1999

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The professional school counselor works to support children and parents in public and private school settings. When a parent decides to provide schooling for children at home, the counselor supports the child as those transitions are made.

Rationale

Three main areas of involvement in children's lives are the home, the school and relationships with peers. When a child is home schooled, those three areas become one. All states allow home schooling, and at a minimum, parents must let the state know of their intentions to teach their children at home and identify the children. Although home schooling parents across the country have banded together to form groups, the major area of concern for school counselors remains the isolation of home schooled children and the impact this has on social development. Professional school counselors address the three main areas of academic, career and personal-social development through their programs, and home schooled children may not receive the information in these areas available to children who attend school.

Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional school counselor works first to advocate for and support children. The school counselor gives information to parents on home schooling as appropriate and gives support as the state and local school system allows. As children and parents leave the school system, the counselor helps them understand the process of returning if they choose. The professional school counselor helps ease the adjustment of children returning to a school setting from home schooling and for children entering school from a home school setting for the first time.

Summary

The professional school counselor advocates for and supports the child whose parent makes the decision to remove him/her from the school setting to a home school. Professional school counselors assist children with transitions to home school as well as from home school back into the school setting.

MILITARY RECRUITMENT

Adopted 1984; revised 1993, 1999

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors encourage and promote positive and equal reception of representatives of all careers, career services and educational institutions in the schools.

Rationale

The relationship between the persons involved in armed services recruitment activities and the educators in a school district is a potential source of comfort and conflict. In most schools, recruiters of one or all military services are welcomed; in others, they are denied entry. In some schools, no information on military careers is seen in career centers; in others, information provided by the military is the only career material available. In order to protect the rights of students, three primary issues emerge: access to students during school time, release of lists of students' names and addresses and administration and use of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). The purpose of this position statement is to set forth reasonable expectations for both school officials and armed services recruiters to provide equal reception in the schools of all representatives of career and educational institutions.

Professional School Counselor's Role

It is desirable that an annual meeting of school officials and armed services recruiters be conducted prior to the beginning of the school year to develop a clear understanding of the school and school district policy and procedures in the coming year. School representatives include the principal, head of the guidance department and the professional school counselor with primary responsibility for military career information. Recruiters would be provided with the student handbook, course catalog and schedule of classes, activities and major events, school organization chart, school map/floor plan and school district policy relating to release of student directory information and access to students. The school will be provided with the name/address/telephone number of their respective COs, recruiting activity plan; Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) testing program, the armed services' stay-in-school policy and current information on education and career opportunities.

The participants will discuss mutual expectations for the school year, including assisting with developing awareness and providing information about the opportunities available for students with the armed services, as well as the Family Rights to Privacy Act and other federal and state statutes. Welcoming armed services participation in those activities where career and educational options are presented and following guidelines in accordance with policies established at the planning meeting should be mutually benefit to students and the military.

Summary

To ensure the delivery of current and accurate military career information and to protect students' rights, armed services recruiters, school administrators and school counselors meet annually to set forth expectations and guidelines.

NON-SCHOOL-COUNSELING-CREDENTIALLED PERSONNEL

Adopted 1994, Revised 2000

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors recognize and support cooperation and collaboration to ensure students' complex needs are being met in a comprehensive, holistic and developmental manner. It is necessary, within each school setting, to establish the appropriate practices and procedures to ensure that individuals perform functions consistent with their training and capabilities and that accountability and supervision are part of every school counseling program. Professional school counselors should not be replaced by non-school-counseling-credentialed personnel.

Rationale

The professional school counselor recognizes that communities across the country are seeking solutions to the highly interrelated problems placing youth at risk of school failure. In response to the concerns, school districts employ a diversity of staff to address students' needs. Schools must be extremely diligent in seeking the most highly trained personnel for dealing with crisis intervention, emotional and personal development and students' sensitive, confidential needs. These situations present themselves on a daily basis in school counseling offices across the country. Individuals with inadequate training may, even with the best of intentions, provide inappropriate responses or interventions that create situations that may jeopardize students' well-being.

In addition to the paraprofessional, peer helpers, volunteers, clerical support staff and other caring individuals, non-credentialed personnel may also include student assistance team members, mentors and agency counselors. Parents who entrust their children to our care must be assured that those providing services in our schools are properly qualified and trained to offer the services they provide. Only then can these collaborative efforts result in the efficient and effective delivery of a professional school counseling program.

Professional School Counselor's Role

Students' needs in school can best be met through collaborative efforts of all personnel employed in the school setting. In situations in which non-credentialed personnel are performing school-counseling-related activities, these services must be limited to the scope of the role of the service provider, based on training and capabilities. Staff, students and parents must be informed as to these helpers' roles within the school, their education level and the scope of their practice. Ethical and professional responsibilities require an assurance that the efforts of non-credentialed personnel are coordinated and supervised to ensure that students are receiving services appropriate to their needs. The supervision and coordination of these activities within the context of the school counseling program must be assumed by credentialed professional school counselors.

Summary

The use of non-credentialed personnel in school counseling programs has become a reality to meet students' diverse needs by using support personnel, including paraprofessionals, peer helpers, volunteers, clerical support staff and other caring individuals. With established

guidelines and parameters and under the leadership and supervision of professional school counselors, appropriate practices and procedures support comprehensive, developmental counseling programs through collaboration and effective communication.

PARENT CONSENT FOR SERVICES

Adopted 1999

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The professional school counselor makes counselees and their parents knowledgeable of the services available through the school counselor. School counselors provide written information regarding school counseling programs to the school public; an explanation of legal and ethical limits to confidentiality may be included. Parental consent for services is obtained if state or local law or policy requires it.

Rationale

Local school boards and school administrators expect professional school counselors to implement a comprehensive counseling program available to all students. The professional school counselor follows all local guidelines regarding the circumstances under which signed consent for services must be obtained.

The professional school counselor has the responsibility to explain confidentiality to his or her clients. The professional school counselor adheres to the guidelines of ASCA's Ethical Standards for School Counselors regarding informing the counselee of the purposes, goals, techniques and rules of procedure for counseling. According to the ethical standards, school counselors ensure that parents understand the counselor's role, especially with regard to confidentiality, and respect the inherent rights and responsibilities of parents for their children while working to establish a collaborative relationship with parents.

Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional school counselor provides written information about the counseling program for students and parents. School counselors follow all local laws and guidelines regarding the circumstances under which signed consent for services must be obtained. As counseling with an individual progresses, it may become important to initiate contact with parents utilizing a consulting role. The consulting process may be initiated by the parent or the counselor. In either case, agreement with the counselee concerning the consultation and information that may be shared is essential to maintain the trust in the counseling relationship.

Summary

Providing written information about the school counseling program is essential to the ethical and legal functioning of the professional school counselor. A full understanding of the counseling relationship and process tends to increase the sense of trust between the counselor, the counselee and parents. School counselors obtain parental permission for services if required by local law or policy.

PEER HELPING

Adopted 1978; Revised 1984, revised 1993, 1999, 2002

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Peer helping programs enhance the effectiveness of school counseling programs by increasing outreach and the expansion of available services.

Rationale

Peer Helping: A variety of interpersonal helping behaviors assumed by nonprofessionals who undertake a helping role with others, including one-to-one helping relationships, group leadership, discussion leadership, tutoring and all activities of an interpersonal helping or assisting nature.

Peer Helper: A person who assumes the role of a helping person with persons of approximately the same age who share related values, experiences and lifestyles.

Students often communicate their problems to their peers rather than to parents, administrators or counselors. In our society, peer influence may be the strongest single motivational force in a student's life. Peers can be selected and trained by professional counselors in communication and helping skills through a carefully planned peer helping program. It is ASCA's position that peer helping programs enhance the effectiveness of the school counseling program by increasing the outreach of the school counseling programs and raising student awareness of services. Through proper selection, training and supervision, peer helping can be a positive force within the school and community.

Peer Helper's Role

Peer helpers provide a variety of useful and helpful services for schools:

- One-to-one assistance: Talking with students about personal or school problems, referring to community resources or providing information about the school's counseling program.
- Group settings: Serving as group leaders, counseling group assistants, teachers of helping skills to other students, communication skills trainers, peer helper trainers.
- Educational functions: Tutoring in academic areas, serving as readers for nonreaders, assisting special education consultants in working with learning and behaviorally disabled students.
- Hospitality: Welcoming and guiding new students and their parents around the school.
- Outreach: Helping increase the services of the school counseling programs, serving as listeners or as a resource for populations that may feel uncomfortable talking with the professional school counselor, reducing crisis situations by alerting professional school counselors to problems of a serious nature.
- Growth: Increasing their own personal growth and becoming more functional at higher levels, training to become more effective adults and possible future occupations in the helping professions.

Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional counselor accepts responsibility for determining the needs of the school population and for implementing a peer helping program designed to meet those needs. Professional school counselors devise a selection plan for peer helpers compatible with the population to be served; coordinate an appropriate training program; schedule adequate time to work with peer helpers on a weekly basis for continued training, supervision, sharing and personal growth; construct a support system through positive, honest public relations; and continually monitor, evaluate and adjust the program and training to meet the assessed needs of the population it serves. The professional school counselor accepts responsibility for the design, completion and evaluation of the peer helping program. Results should be reported to the population served and other interested persons (i.e., school boards, etc.), including counselors.

Summary

Well-trained peer helpers can have a positive, supportive effect upon students that no one else can provide. Students can relate to and accept alternative patterns of behavior from peers who are struggling with similar feelings and problems. Peer helpers increase the services of the school counseling program in an outreach function and are an invaluable part of a comprehensive school counseling program.

PROMOTION OF SAFE SCHOOLS

Adopted 1994

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

ASCA believes students have a fundamental and immutable right to attend school without the fear or threat of violence, weapons or gangs.

Rationale

Safe schools are essential to an effective learning environment and necessary for quality schools. There is a threat to this safety due to the rapid increase of violence, weapons or gangs in the schools. The need to promote and provide a safe school environment is recognized by students, parents, staff, administrators, other school personnel, legislators and the community at large.

Professional School Counselor's Role

It is the professional school counselor's role to support programs and provide leadership emphasizing prevention and intervention related to violence, weapons and gangs. Programs for students must be designed to teach nonviolent alternatives to resolve differences. Inherent in these programs is an emphasis on the teaching of communication skills and an awareness of and an acceptance of diversity. The professional school counselor encourages and supports the shared responsibility of ensuring and providing a safe school environment and the development of policies to support a safe environment.

Summary

ASCA believes it is each student's right to attend a safe school that provides opportunities for optimum learning in an environment that values and respects diversity and equity.

SAFETY ON THE INTERNET

Adopted 2000

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recognizes both the democratic rights of all citizens in regard to freedom of speech and access to information. These freedoms must be balanced with the need for appropriate guidance, protection and security through students' development stages. Professional school counselors advise parents and school personnel in determining age-appropriate materials and resources for children. This important information may be disseminated as part of the school's comprehensive developmental school counseling program. Professional school counselors are cognizant of the benefits of accessing programs and materials for students as well as the need to ensure the safety of students with regard to online threats, privacy, access to personal information and consent.

Rationale

The Internet is an extraordinary resource for up-to-date information, crossing geographical boundaries, accessing archived information, meeting people, publicizing a commercial venture or business and having fun. Within the Internet, however, few parameters or traditional danger cues exist. The Internet does not have a central organizing body and authors of Internet information in chat rooms, pen pal services and on home pages have anonymity. These factors provide a potential for students to be victimized.

Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors know children's development stages and can provide Internet guidelines to parents and school personnel. ASCA encourages school counselors to disseminate the Internet Safety Guidelines authored by its partner, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Professional school counselors can educate parents on the potential for addictive behaviors in computer use. The professional school counselor is a consultant to parents, students and school personnel in cultivating those safety and survival skills related to Internet use.

Summary

The Internet provides global opportunities for learning and exploring. Because of the freedom of access and use, professional school counselors need to assist and support parents and school personnel in protecting their students from harm and victimization.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION OF YOUTH

Adopted 1995, Revised 2000

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors are committed to facilitating and promoting the fullest possible development of each individual by reducing the barriers of misinformation, myth, ignorance, hatred and discrimination based on sexual orientation. Professional school counselors are in a field committed to human development and must be sensitive to the use of inclusive language and positive modeling. ASCA is committed to equal opportunity and respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation.

Rationale

Identity is determined by a complex mix of nature and nurture. Developmental literature clearly states that sexual orientation is firmly established by age five and much research indicates such establishment occurs even earlier. Many internal and external obstacles exist in school and society that inhibit students from accurately understanding and positively accepting their sexual orientation. Professional school counselors need to become accurately informed and aware of the ways communication limits the opportunities and infringes upon the development of self-acceptance and healthy esteem. Harm is perpetrated against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth through language, stereotypes, myths, misinformation, threat of expulsion from social and institutional structures and other entities and from beliefs contrary to their identity. These youth begin to experience self-identification and the "coming out" process, both essentially cognitive activities, during adolescence. Such identification is not indicative of sexual activity.

Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional school counselor uses inclusive and non-presumptive language with equitable expectations toward individuals, being especially sensitive to those aspects of communication and social structures/institutions providing accurate working models of acceptance of identities and equality. Professional school counselors must be vigilant to the pervasive negative effects of stereotyping individuals into rigid gender roles and sexual identities.

The professional school counselor is sensitive to ways in which attitudes and behavior negatively affect the individual. School counselors are called to provide constructive feedback on the negative use of exclusive, presumptive language and inequitable expectations toward sexual-orientation minorities. The school counselor places emphasis on a person's behavioral choices and not on his or her identity and uniqueness. Demonstrations of sexual-orientation-minority equity also include fair and accurate representation of sexual identities in visible leadership positions as well as other role positions.

Summary

The professional school counselor is committed to the inclusion and affirmation of youths of all sexual orientation. The professional school counselor supports consciousness-raising among school counselors and increased modeling of inclusive language, advocacy and equal opportunity for participation for all. This is done to break through individual, social and institutional behaviors and expectations limiting the development of human potential in all populations.

THE SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENT

Adopted 1999

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors encourage and support the academic, social/emotional and career development of all students through counseling programs within the schools. They are committed to helping all students realize their full potential despite cognitive, emotional, medical, behavioral, physical or social disabilities.

Rationale

Professional school counselors have increasingly important roles in working with the special needs student. With the passage of Public Law 94-142 and the current Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and 504 legislation, schools are required to provide an equitable education for all students, including those with special needs. Components of IDEA such as due process, individual educational programs, behavior modification plans and least restrictive environment offer opportunities to use the professional school counselor's skills to benefit special needs students. Students who were once served in isolated special education environments are now taught in regular classrooms or are mainstreamed for the maximum time appropriate. Professional school counselors work with special needs students both in special class settings and in the regular classroom. It is particularly important that the professional school counselor's role in these procedures is clearly defined and understood by all concerned.

Professional School Counselor's Role

Interventions in which the professional school counselor participates may include but are not limited to: serving on the school's multidisciplinary team to identify the special needs student; collaborating with other pupil support specialists in the delivery of services; providing social skills training in a classroom setting, in small groups or individually; leading group guidance activities to improve self-esteem through the comprehensive counseling and guidance program; providing group and individual counseling; advocating for special needs students in the school and in the community; assisting with the establishment and implementation of behavior modification plans; providing guidance and counseling for career planning and a smooth post-secondary transition from school to career; working with staff and parents to understand the special needs of these students; counseling parents and families; and making referrals to other appropriate specialists within the school system and in the community.

ASCA believes that it is not the professional school counselor's responsibility to be the only source of information or administrative representative in a district in preparing individual education plans (IEPs) for students other than those portions relating to guidance and counseling. Further, school counselors should not make decisions regarding placement or retention or serve in any supervisory capacity in relation to the implementation of IDEA nor should they serve as a member of a multidisciplinary team reviewing placement referrals for those students not usually part of the counselor's caseload. In addition, the school counselor should not be responsible for the coordination of the 504 planning team or supervision of the implementation of the 504 plan.

Summary

The professional school counselor takes an active role in providing guidance and counseling services for students with special needs. School counselors advocate for all students, and services are provided to special needs students consistent with those provided to all students in the school counselor's caseload.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Adopted 1994, Revised 2000

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors play a key role in initiating and creating student assistance programs in the schools.

Rationale

Although the problem of chemical dependence has received widespread attention in the media and in the helping professions, there remains a variety of approaches to address this problem. Student assistance programs, which can deal with substance abuse as well as other high-risk situations, serve as a systematic effort to help students understand themselves as self-respecting human beings while helping them to accept responsibility for their own actions.

Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors provide comprehensive programs with a variety of counseling services. Although the focus of school counseling programs is on primary prevention and development, the realities of life and work cause school counselors to address problems that already exist and that are in some cases well-entrenched. This emphasizes the need to include crisis and remediation components in comprehensive school counseling programs, and student assistance programs may complement them. The school counselor may be the key person to coordinate the student assistance program. These programs provide proactive approaches to existing substance abuse problems and other high-risk or crisis situations. Assistance involves early identification of problem behavior by specifically trained staff, thorough assessment and appropriate referral and follow-up.

Summary

Student assistance programs are designed to help students and their families with problems affecting their personal lives and academic performance. Professional school counselors, through comprehensive school counseling programs, should assist in the integration of student assistance programs. It is the professional school counselor's responsibility to refer the student to the appropriate agencies and/or other professional consultants if the counselor learns that the student's problems are beyond the counselor's own professional expertise or scope of practice. The counselor must use information in accord with ASCA's prescribed professional ethics and within the limitations defined by local, state and federal laws.

STUDENTS-AT-RISK

Adopted 1989-90; revised 1993, 1999

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors at all levels make a significant, vital and indispensable contribution toward the academic, career and personal/social success of "at-risk" students. School counselors work in a leadership role with other student service professionals including social workers, psychologists and nurses, in liaison with staff and parents, to provide comprehensive developmental counseling programs for all students.

Rationale

There are probably as many definitions of the "at-risk" student as there are school districts. Any student may be at risk with respect to dropping out of school, becoming truant, performing below academic potential or exhibiting behaviors that may be harmful to self and/or others. The underlying reasons for these behaviors often deal with personal and social concerns such as poor self-esteem, family problems, unresolved grief, neglect or abuse. Students experiencing these concerns can be helped by professional school counselors. The decision to drop out of school can carry with it devastating lifelong implications. The school counselor, in conjunction with other school staff members, identifies potential dropouts and other students considered at-risk and works closely with them to help them stay in school or find alternative means of completing their education.

Professional School Counselor's Role

The school counselor provides proactive leadership in the area of prevention and consults in identifying "at-risk" students. The goal is to identify and intervene before they move through a continuum of self-destructive behavior. The school counselor provides responsive programs, including short-term individual, group, family and crisis counseling; provides programs for individual planning to meet academic, educational and career counseling needs; provides curriculum programs to strengthen personal/interpersonal skills (choice, self-acceptance, feelings, beliefs and behaviors, problem-solving, decision-making); identifies suicidal students, counsels them and refers them to appropriate outside agencies; provides in-service support presentations to staff; provides referrals for additional specialized support services within the district and from other community resources; and provides consultation with and support for parents/guardians of at-risk students. The school counselor works as a member of a team with other student service professionals.

Summary

Professional school counselors, through a comprehensive, developmental, K-12 school counseling program, work with other educators and community resources to provide prevention, early identification and intervention for all students who may be considered at-risk.

USE OF SUPPORT STAFF IN COUNSELING PROGRAMS

Adopted 1974; reviewed and reaffirmed 1980; revised 1986, 1993, 1999, 2001

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Counselor support staff members in the counseling program provide assistance so that professional school counselors can use their own professional expertise more effectively. Counselor support staff members address the issue of clerical and routine responsibilities of the counseling department. Counselor support staff should never be used to replace professional school counselors.

Rationale

The utilization of counselor support staff provides a means of developing greater effectiveness within the guidance and within the counseling program. Counselor support staff members allow time for the professional school counselor to provide more of the services and deliver the programs that requires specialized skills and training.

Role of Paraprofessionals in Counseling Programs

With the appropriate education and training of carefully selected personnel, counselor support staff members, under careful supervision, could assist in the following areas:

Clerical Worker: collect and maintain current files, reproduce materials needed for the professional school counselor in group or individual conferences, assist with student record keeping, assist students in completion of varied forms and applications, collect and distribute test materials, assist in monitoring group tests, and prepare and organize answer sheets for scoring (not interpretation of test results).

Resource Person: Under the supervision of a professional school counselor, the resource person may assist the counselor and perform duties, such as disseminate information, coordinate resources and counseling materials, record keeping, data entry and collection. Some counselor supportive staff duties may require specialized training.

The counselor support staff member should possess sensitivity to students' problems and needs, manifest an interest in working with students and be knowledgeable of the role of the professional school counselor and the total guidance and counseling program.

Professional School Counselor's Role

The professional school counselor should assist in the selection of counselor support staff and assume the responsibility of supervision of counselor supportive staff members.

ASCA encourages post-secondary institutions to offer training for counselor support staff in guidance and counseling programs. ASCA also encourages the collaboration of state education department personnel, post-secondary student services personnel and guidance and counseling personnel in local school districts in instituting such courses or programs.

The training for counselor support staff should include clerical training, operation and use of multimedia material, use and operation of computers, practical investigations or research

techniques, human relations, the monitoring of group testing, ethics, community resources, and training in confidentiality with regard to student records.

Summary

The utilization of counselor support staff in guidance and counseling programs provides a means to develop greater effectiveness within the program, allowing time for the professional school counselor to provide more of the services requiring specialized skills and training. Courses and training for counselor support staff should be instituted in collaboration with local school districts and the state department of education.