

Executive Summary

School counseling programs are collaborative efforts benefiting students, parents, teachers, administrators and the overall community. School counseling programs should be an integral part of students' daily educational environment, and school counselors should be partners in student achievement.

The question has often been posed, "What do school counselors do?" The more important question is, "How are students different because of what school counselors do?"

By implementing a school counseling program that is comprehensive, developmental and based on standards, schools can:

- Establish a school counseling program as an integral component of the academic mission of the school.
- Ensure every student has equitable access to the school counseling program.
- Identify and deliver the knowledge and skills all students should acquire.
- Ensure that the school counseling program is comprehensive in design and is delivered systematically to all students.

As educators who are specially trained in child and adolescent development, school counselors take a leadership role in effecting systemic change in a school. However, a successful school counseling program requires collaboration among parents, students, school counselors, administrators, teachers, and support staff working together for the benefit of every student.

A School Counseling Program consists of four interrelated components: foundation, delivery system, management system, and accountability system. Infused throughout the program are the qualities of leadership, advocacy and collaboration, which lead to systemic change.

Foundation

Like any solid structure, a school counseling program is built on a strong foundation. Based on the school's goals for student achievement, what every student should know and should be able to do, the foundation determines how every student will benefit from a school counseling program.

Philosophy

The philosophy is a set of principles guiding the program development, implementation, and evaluation. Everyone involved in managing and implementing the program should reach consensus on each belief or guiding principle.

Mission

A mission statement describes the program's purpose and goals. A school counseling program mission statement aligns with and is a subset of the school and district's mission.

National Standards for Student Development

The American School Counselor Association's National Standards outline competencies that serve as a foundation for the School Counseling Program. Student competencies define the knowledge, attitudes, and skills students should obtain as a result of participating in a school counseling program.

Academic Development

- A Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills contributing to effective learning in school and across the lifespan.
- B Students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide range of substantial post-secondary options, including college.
- C Students will understand the relationship of academics to the world of work and to life at home and in the community.

Career Development

- A Students will acquire the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions.
- B Students will employ strategies to achieve future career goals with success and satisfaction.
- C Students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education, training and the world of work.

Personal/Social Development

- A Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.
- B Students will make decisions, set goals and take necessary action to achieve goals.
- C Students will understand safety and survival skills.

Delivery System

Based on the core beliefs, philosophies and missions identified in the foundation, the delivery system describes the activities, interactions and methods to deliver the program.

Guidance Curriculum

A guidance curriculum is composed of developmental lessons designed to assist students in achieving the desired competencies and provides all students with the knowledge and skills appropriate for their developmental level. The guidance curriculum

is infused throughout the school's overall curriculum and is presented systematically through K-12 classroom and group activities.

Student Planning

School counselors coordinate ongoing activities designed to assist students individually in establishing personal goals and developing future plans.

Responsive Services

Responsive services are activities that meet individual students' immediate needs, usually necessitated by life events or conditions in students' lives. These needs often require counseling, consultation, referral, and offering information.

Systems Support

Like any organized activity, a school counseling program requires administration and management to establish, maintain, and enhance the total counseling program.

Management System

Integrated with the delivery system is a management system, which incorporates organizational processes and tools necessary to ensure the program is organized, concrete, clearly delineated, and reflective of the school's needs. This is a relatively new concept for administrators and school counselors who traditionally have not viewed counselors as "managers."

Agreements

Management agreements ensure effective implementation of the delivery system to meet students' needs. These agreements, which address how the school counseling program is organized and what will be accomplished, should be negotiated with and approved by designated administrators at the beginning of each school year.

Advisory Council

An advisory council is a group of people appointed to review counseling program results and to make recommendations. Students, parents, teachers, counselors, administration and community members should be represented on the council.

Use of Data

A comprehensive school counseling program is data driven. The use of data to effect change within the school system is integral to ensuring every student receives the benefits of the school counseling program. School counselors must show that each activity implemented as part of the program was developed from a careful analysis of students' needs, achievement and/or related data.

Use of Time

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends that school counselors spend 70 percent of their time in direct service (contact) with students and provides a guide to school counselors and administrators for determining the amount of

time their program should devote to each of the four components of the delivery system. Because resources are limited, school counselors' time should be protected; duties need to be limited to program delivery and direct counseling services, and non-counseling activities should be reassigned whenever possible.

Accountability

School counselors and administrators are increasingly challenged to demonstrate the effectiveness of the school counseling program in measurable terms. To evaluate the program and to hold it accountable, school counseling programs must collect and use data that link the program to student achievement.

Results Reports

Results reports, which include process, perception and results data, ensure that programs are implemented, assessed for effectiveness, and modified as needed. Immediate and long-range results are collected and analyzed for program improvement.

School Counselor Responsibilities

School counselors have many duties and responsibilities related to designing and implementing a comprehensive school counseling program. Therefore, programs should free school counselors to do what they do best and what only they can do. Most school counselors have a master's degree and are typically the only people in a school with formal training in both mental health and education. Although school counselors are team players who understand fair-share responsibilities within a school system, they cannot be fully effective when they are taken away from essential counseling tasks to perform non-counseling activities.

Appropriate (counseling) responsibilities:

- Individual student academic program planning
- Interpreting cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests
- Counseling students who are tardy, absent or have disciplinary problems
- Collaborating with teachers to present guidance curriculum lessons
- Interpreting student records
- Collaborating with teachers regarding management of study halls
- Ensuring that student records are maintained as per state and federal regulations
- Working with students to provide small- and large-group counseling services
- Advocating for students at individual education plan meetings, student study teams, and school attendance review boards
- Disaggregated data analysis

Inappropriate (non-counseling) activities:

- Registration and scheduling of all new students
- Administering cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests
- Responsibility for signing excuses for students who are tardy or absent

- Performing disciplinary actions
 - Teaching classes when teachers are absent
 - Computing grade-point averages
 - Supervising study halls
 - Clerical record keeping
 - Assisting with duties in the principal's office
 - Data entry
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Historically, many school counselors spend much of their time responding to the needs of a small percentage of students, typically those who are high achievers or who are high risk. A School Counseling Program encourages school counselors to provide direct services to all students.

The School Counseling Program supports the school's overall mission by promoting academic achievement, career planning, and personal/social development. It serves as a framework to guide districts and schools in planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating a school counseling program.