

# Why School Counselors?

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELORS

“Today’s young people are living in an exciting time, with an increasingly diverse society, new technologies and expanding opportunities. To help ensure that they are prepared to become the next generation of parents, workers, leaders and citizens, every student needs support, guidance and opportunities during childhood, a time of rapid growth and change. Children face unique and diverse challenges, both personally and developmentally, that have an impact on academic achievement.”

– “Toward a Blueprint for Youth: Making Positive Youth Development a National Priority,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

### Elementary School Students’ Developmental Needs

The elementary years are a time when students begin to develop their academic self-concept and their feelings of competence and confidence as learners. They are beginning to develop decision-making, communication and life skills, as well as character values. It is also a time when students develop and acquire attitudes toward school self, peers, social groups and family. Comprehensive developmental school counseling programs provide education, prevention and intervention services, which are integrated into all aspects of children’s lives. Early identification and intervention of children’s academic and personal/social needs is essential in removing barriers to learning and in promoting academic achievement. The knowledge, attitudes and skills that students acquire in the areas of academic, career and personal/social development during these elementary years serve as the foundation for future success.

### Meeting the Challenge

Elementary school counselors are professional educators with a mental health perspective who understand and respond to the challenges presented by today’s diverse student population. Elementary school counselors don’t work in isolation; rather they are integral to the total educational program. They provide proactive leadership that engages all stakeholders in the delivery of programs and services to help students achieve school success. Professional school counselors align with the school’s mission to support the academic achievement of all students as they prepare for the ever-changing world of the 21st century. This mission is accomplished through the design, development, implementation and evaluation of a comprehensive, developmental and systematic school counseling program. ASCA’s National Standards in the academic, career, and personal/social domains are the foundation for this work. The ASCA National Model: A Framework For School Counseling Programs (ASCA, 2002), with its data-driven and results-based focus, serves as a guide for today’s school counselor who is uniquely trained to implement this program.

### Elementary School Counselors Implement the Counseling Program by Providing:

#### *School Guidance Curriculum*

- Academic support, including organizational, study and test-taking skills
- Goal setting and decision-making
- Career awareness, exploration and planning
- Education on understanding self and others
- Peer relationships, coping strategies and effective social skills
- Communication, problem-solving and conflict resolution
- Substance abuse education
- Multicultural/diversity awareness

# Why School Counselors?

## *Individual Student Planning*

- Academic planning
- Goal setting/decision- making
- Education on understanding of self, including strengths and weaknesses
- Transition plans

## *Responsive Services*

- Individual and small-group counseling
- Individual/family/school crisis intervention
- Conflict resolution
- Consultation/collaboration
- Referrals

## *System Support*

- Professional development
- Consultation, collaboration and teaming
- Program management and operation

## **Elementary School Counselors Collaborate with:**

- **Parents**
  - Parent education
  - Communication/networking
  - Academic planning
  - College/career awareness programs
  - One-on-one parent conferencing
  - Interpretation of assessment results
- **Teachers**
  - Classroom guidance activities
  - Academic support, including learning style assessment and education to help students succeed academically
  - Classroom speakers
  - At-risk student identification and implementation of interventions to enhance success
- **Administrators**
  - School climate
  - Behavioral management plans
  - School-wide needs assessments
  - Student data and results
  - Student assistance team building
- **Students**
  - Peer education
  - Peer support
  - Academic support
  - School climate
  - Leadership development
  - Community
  - Job shadowing, service learning
  - Crisis interventions
  - Referrals
  - Parenting classes
  - Support groups

# Why School Counselors?

Career education

\*\*These examples are not intended to be all-inclusive

## Why Elementary School Counselors?

Elementary school years set the tone for developing the knowledge, attitudes and skill necessary for children to become healthy, competent and confident learners. Through a comprehensive developmental school counseling program, counselors work as a team with the school staff, parents and the community to create a caring climate and atmosphere. By providing education, prevention, early identification and intervention, school counselors can help all children can achieve academic success. The professional elementary school counselor holds a master's degree and required state certification in school counseling. Maintaining certification includes on-going professional development to stay current with education reform and challenges facing today's students. Professional association membership enhances the school counselor's knowledge and effectiveness.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL COUNSELORS

"Today's young people are living in an exciting time, with an increasingly diverse society, new technologies, and expanding opportunities. To help ensure that they are prepared to become the next generation of parents, workers, leaders, and citizens", every student needs support, guidance, and opportunities during adolescence, a time of rapid growth and change. Early adolescents face unique and diverse challenges, both personally and developmentally, that have an impact on academic achievement.

### Middle School Students' Developmental Needs

Middle school is an exciting, yet challenging time for students, their parents and teachers. During this passage from childhood to adolescence, middle school students are characterized by a need to explore a variety of interests, connecting their learning in the classroom to its practical application in life and work; high levels of activity coupled with frequent fatigue due to rapid growth; a search for their own unique identity as they begin turning more frequently to peers rather than parents for ideas and affirmation; extreme sensitivity to the comments from others; and heavy reliance on friends to provide comfort, understanding and approval.

### Meeting the Challenge

Middle school counselors are professional educators with a mental health perspective who understand and respond to the challenges presented by today's diverse student population. Middle school counselors do not work in isolation; rather they are integral to the total educational program. They provide proactive leadership that engages all stakeholders in the delivery of programs and services to help students achieve success in school. Professional school counselors align with the school's mission to support the academic achievement of all students as they prepare for the ever-changing world of the 21st century. This mission is accomplished through the design, development, implementation and evaluation of a comprehensive, developmental and systematic school counseling program. The ASCA National Standards in the academic, National Model: A Framework For School Counseling Programs, with its data driven and results-based focus serves as a guide for today's school counselor who is uniquely trained to implement this program.

### Middle School Counselors Implement the Counseling Program by Providing:

*School Guidance Curriculum*

# Why School Counselors?

Academic skills support  
Organizational, study and test-taking skills  
Education in understanding self and others  
Coping strategies  
Peer relationships and effective social skills  
Communication, problem-solving, decision-making and conflict resolution  
Career awareness, exploration and planning  
Substance abuse education  
Multicultural/diversity awareness

## *Individual Student Planning*

Goal-setting/decision- making  
Academic planning  
Career planning  
Education in understanding of self, including strengths and weaknesses  
Transition planning

## *Responsive Services*

Individual and small group counseling  
Individual/family/school crisis intervention  
Peer facilitation  
Consultation/collaboration  
Referrals

## *System Support*

Professional development  
Consultation, collaboration and teaming  
Program management and operation

## **Middle School Counselors Collaborate With:**

- **Parents**
  - Parent information night
  - Communication/networking
  - Academic planning programs
  - Parent and family education
  - One-on-one parent conferencing
  - Assessment results interpretation
  - Resource referrals
  - College/career exploration
- **Teachers**
  - Career portfolio development
  - Assistance with students' academic plans
  - Classroom guidance activities on study skills, career development, etc.
  - Academic support, learning style assessment and education to help students succeed academically
  - Classroom career speakers
  - At-risk student identification and implementation of interventions to enhance success
  - Parent communication/education

# Why School Counselors?

- **Administrators**
  - School climate
  - Behavioral management plans
  - School-wide needs assessment
  - Student data and results
  - Student assistance team building
  - Leadership
- **Students**
  - Peer education
  - Peer support
  - Academic support
  - School climate
  - Leadership development
- **Community**
  - Job shadowing, service learning
  - Crisis interventions
  - Referrals
  - Parenting classes
  - Support groups
  - Career education

## Why Middle School Counselors?

Middle school students are characterized by rapid physical growth, curiosity about their world and an emerging self-identity. Through a comprehensive developmental school counseling program, counselors work as a team member with school staff, parents and the community to create a caring, supportive climate and atmosphere whereby young adolescents can achieve academic success. Middle school counselors enhance the learning process and promote academic achievement. School counseling programs are essential for students to achieve optimal personal growth, acquire positive social skills and values, set appropriate career goals and realize full academic potential to become productive, contributing members of the world community. The professional middle school counselor holds a master's degree and required state certification in school counseling. Maintaining certification includes on-going professional development to stay current with education reform and challenges facing today's students. Professional association membership is encouraged as it enhances the school counselor's knowledge and effectiveness.

## HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS

"Today's young people are living in an exciting time, with an increasingly diverse and mobile society, new technologies, and expanding opportunities. To help ensure that they are prepared to become the next generation of parents, workers, leaders, and citizens", every student needs support, guidance, and opportunities during adolescence, a time of rapid growth and change. Adolescents face unique and diverse challenges, both personally and developmentally, that impact academic achievement.

## Secondary School Students' Developmental Needs

High school is the final transition into adulthood and the world of work as students begin separating from parents and exploring and defining their independence. Students are deciding who they are, what they do well, and what they will do when they graduate. During these adolescent years, students are evaluating their strengths, skills and abilities. The biggest influence is their peer group. They are searching for a place to belong and rely on peer acceptance and feedback.

# Why School Counselors?

They face increased pressures regarding risk behaviors involving sex, alcohol and drugs while exploring the boundaries of more acceptable behavior and mature, meaningful relationships. They need guidance in making concrete and compounded decisions. They must deal with academic pressures as they face high-stakes testing, the challenges of college admissions, the scholarship and financial aid application process and entrance into a competitive job market.

## Meeting the Challenge

Secondary school counselors are professional educators with a mental health perspective who understand and respond to the challenges presented by today's diverse student population. Secondary school counselors do not work in isolation; rather they are integral to the total educational program. They provide proactive leadership that engages all stakeholders in the delivery of programs and services to help the student achieve success in school. Professional school counselors align and work with the school's mission to support the academic achievement of all students as they prepare for the ever-changing world of the 21st century. This mission is accomplished through the design, development, implementation and evaluation of a comprehensive, developmental and systematic school-counseling program. The ASCA National Standards in the academic, career, and personal/social domains are the foundation for this work. The ASCA National Model: A Framework For School Counseling Programs (2), with its data-driven and results-based focus serves as a guide for today's school counselor who is uniquely trained to implement this program.

Secondary School Counselors Implement the Counseling Program by Providing:

### *Classroom Guidance*

- Academic skills support
- Organizational, study and test-taking skills
- Post-secondary planning and application process
- Career planning
- Education in understanding self and others
- Coping strategies
- Peer relationships and effective social skills
- Communication, problem-solving, decision-making, conflict resolution and study skills
- Career awareness and the world of work
- Substance abuse education
- Multicultural/diversity awareness

### *Individual Student Planning*

- Goal setting
- Academic plans
- Career plans
- Problem solving
- Education in understanding of self, including strengths and weaknesses
- Transition plans

### *Responsive Services*

- Individual and small-group counseling
- Individual/family/school crisis intervention
- Peer facilitation
- Consultation/collaboration

# Why School Counselors?

- Referrals

## *System Support*

- Professional development
- Consultation, collaboration and teaming
- Program management and operation

These examples are not intended to be all-inclusive.

## Secondary School Counselors Collaborate with:

- **Parents**
  - Academic planning/support
  - Post-secondary planning
  - Scholarship/financial search process
  - School-to-parent communications
  - School-to-work transition programs
  - One-on-one parent conferencing
  - Referral process
- **Students**
  - Academic support services
  - Program planning
  - Peer education program
  - Peer mediation program
  - Crisis management
  - Transition programs
- **Teachers**
  - Portfolio development, providing recommendations and assisting students with the post-secondary application process
  - Classroom guidance lessons on post-secondary planning, study skills, career development, etc.
  - School-to-work transition programs
  - Academic support, learning style assessment and education to help students succeed academically
  - Classroom speakers
  - At-risk student identification and implementation of interventions to enhance success
- **Administrators**
  - School climate
  - Academic support interventions
  - Behavioral management plans
  - School-wide needs assessments
  - Data sharing
  - Student assistance team development
- **Community**
  - Job shadowing, worked-based learning, part-time jobs, etc.
  - Crisis interventions
  - Referrals
  - Career education

## Why High School Counselors?

## Why School Counselors?

High school years are full of growth, promise, excitement, frustration, disappointment and hope. It is the time when students begin to discover what the future holds for them. Secondary school counselors enhance the learning process and promote academic achievement. School counseling programs are essential for students to achieve optimal personal growth, acquire positive social skills and values, set appropriate career goals and realize full academic potential to become productive, contributing members of the world community. The professional high school counselor holds a master's degree and required state certification in school counseling. Maintaining certification includes on-going professional development to stay current with educational reform and challenges facing today's students. Professional association membership is encouraged as it enhances the school counselor's knowledge and effectiveness.

### SCHOOL COUNSELING DIRECTORS/COORDINATORS

Professional school counselors have a positive impact on student achievement through programs and services that are a part of a comprehensive school counseling program. The development and implementation of these programs, as outlined by "The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling" (ASCA, 2005), requires a collaborative effort among well-trained, highly competent professional school counselors. School counselor directors/coordinators provide leadership at the district and state levels to ensure:

- the employment of highly qualified school counselors
- the development, implementation and evaluation of comprehensive school counseling programs that benefit all students
- the availability of professional development, consultation and supervision relevant to school counseling
- the use of performance appraisal instruments based on the appropriate role of the professional school counselor

### Meeting The Challenge

School counselor directors/coordinators collaborate with professional school counselors to develop, implement and evaluate comprehensive school counseling programs. Comprehensive school counseling programs, aligned with school, district and state missions, promote academic achievement and success for all students as they prepare for the ever-changing world of the 21st century. The ASCA National Model® serves as a guide for today's professional school counselor, who is uniquely trained to implement this program. Driven by student data and based on standards of academic, career and personal/social development, these programs lead to results measured by improvement in academics, attendance and behavior of all students.

School counselor directors/coordinators:

- advocate for the needs of students, based on school and district data
- work to eliminate barriers to access and equity to a rigorous education for all students
- provide information about the need for a K-12 comprehensive school counseling program to school-, district- and state-level administrators, school boards and the community
- provide leadership toward the implementation of the comprehensive school counseling program at the school, district and state levels
- provide leadership in the process of hiring qualified, diverse professional school counselors
- encourage membership and involvement in professional school counselor associations
- advocate for programs and services that lead to student success and achievement with school staff members, parents, district- and state-level staff, school board members and the community
- advocate for a professional school-counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250
- advocate for professional school counselors to spend 80 percent of their time in direct services to students as defined by the ASCA National Model®
- provide individual and group supervision to school counselors in practice

## Why School Counselors?

- provide leadership in the evaluation process to ensure school counselor performance appraisal is aligned with the appropriate role of the professional school counselor
- ensure regularly scheduled professional development for school counselors and for the continuous improvement of the school counseling program
- collaborate in the supervision of school counseling interns/fieldwork students
- coordinate the integration of school counseling programs with the total educational curriculum of the school district and state
- collaborate with school staff and community members on district and state leadership teams
- encourage professional school counselors to participate in school leadership teams
- provide leadership to promote equity in policies and procedures that impact students
- Collaborate or serve as a liaison with school and community officials regarding crisis response efforts

### **Supervision of a Comprehensive School Counseling Program**

School counselor directors/coordinators have advanced training in supervision and school counseling programs. School counselor directors/coordinators provide direction to school administrators if these administrators supervise professional school counselors. School counselor directors/coordinators also provide feedback and support to professional school counselors as the school counselors develop and implement comprehensive school counseling programs.

The ASCA National Model® provides in-depth information on the development of a comprehensive school counseling program. The primary responsibility of the school counselor director/coordinator in a district or state is to provide leadership and support in the development and implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program based upon the identified needs of the students in the individual school building, district or state.

### **A Credentialed and/or Licensed Professional**

Professional school counselor directors/coordinators hold a master's degree or higher in counseling or the substantial equivalent and meet licensure and credentialing requirements in school counseling as defined by each state. These degree and licensure requirements include the completion of supervised practicum and internship/fieldwork experiences. Many states require that school counselor directors/coordinators hold administrative and/or supervisory licensure in addition to school counseling licensure.

### **Why School Counseling Directors/Coordinators?**

The development and implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs requires a collaborative effort among well-trained, highly competent professional school counselors. School counselor directors/coordinators ensure that highly qualified school counselors are hired, professional development, consultation and supervision are provided and that school counselors are evaluated in relationship to the professional competencies as outlined by the ASCA National Model. School counselor directors/coordinators also provide leadership for the development and implementation of an effective comprehensive school counseling program. Their efforts include promoting or coordinating the design, delivery, evaluation and improvement of comprehensive school counseling programs in a systematic manner to improve the academics, attendance and behavior of all students.

# Why School Counselors?