

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

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

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

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

The Rationale

To achieve maximum effectiveness, the ASCA National Model recommends a student-to-school-counselor ratio of 250:1 and that 80 percent or more of a school counselor's time be spent providing direct and indirect services to students (ASCA, 2019). However, even though recent studies have demonstrated significant correlations between student achievement and student-to-school-counselor ratios (e.g., Gewertz, 2018), the national average ratio is 455-to-1 for the 2016–2017 school year. In addition, the ASCA National Model offers a framework for a school counseling program that includes testing coordination and clerical duties on its list of “inappropriate activities for school counselors” (ASCA, 2019).

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

The Role of Support Staff in School Counseling Programs

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

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

The School Counselor's Role

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

Summary

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

References

American School Counselor Association (2019). *ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling programs* (4th ed.). Alexandria, VA: Author.

Atici, M. (2014). Examination of school counselors' activities: From the perspectives of counselor efficacy and collaboration with school staff. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice, 14*(6), 2107–2120. <https://doi.org/10.12738/estp.2014.6.2554>

Gewertz, C. (2018). School counseling: State-by-state student-to-counselor ratio report: 10-year trends. *Education Week, 14*, 5.

Heitin, L. (2013). School counselors, support staff work hard amid scant resources. *Education Week, 32*(16), 22. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=shib&db=f5h&AN=84698597&site=eds-live&custid=s8501869>

Public Agenda. (2010). *Can I get a little advice here?*, downloaded from http://www.publicagenda.org/theirwholelifesaheadofthem?qt_active=1.