

ASCA Ethical Standards: Interpretation and Application

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Learning Objectives

- Attendees will know best ethical practices, values and expected behaviors of the school counseling professional
- Attendees will be able to describe the clarified roles and responsibilities of the school counseling professional.
- Attendees will understand how the ethical standards support and provide direction for self-assessment, peer consultation and evaluation in relation to school counselors' responsibilities to students

Clarifying School Counselor Roles & Responsibilities

Part 1

A.1. Supporting Student Development (Mental Health)

- b. Provide counseling to students in a brief context and support students and families/guardians in obtaining outside services if the student needs long-term clinical counseling.
- c. Do not diagnose but remain acutely aware of how a student's diagnosis can potentially affect the student's academic success.
- h. Provide effective, responsive interventions to address student needs.
- i. Consider the involvement of support networks, wraparound services and educational teams needed to best serve students.



A.6. Appropriate Referrals and Advocacy

- a. Collaborate with all relevant stakeholders when student assistance is needed, including the identification of early warning signs of student distress.
- b. School counselors provide multiple referral options or the district's vetted list
- d. Develop a plan for the transitioning of primary counseling services. Students retain the right for the referred services to be done in coordination with the school counselor or to discontinue counseling services with the school counselor while maintaining an appropriate relationship that may include providing other school support services.
- f. Attempt to establish a collaborative relationship with outside service providers. Request a release of information signed by the student and/or parents/guardians before attempting to collaborate with the student's external provider.

The School Counselor's Role- Student Mental Health

- Deliver curriculum that enhances mental health awareness
- Provide responsive service
- Recognize warning signs
- Provide school-based prevention, universal/targeted interventions
- Provide individual planning for social/emotional needs
- Educate school community about mental health concerns
- Advocate, collaborate & coordinate access to mental health services
- Address barriers to mental health services and stigma
- Provide assistance through referrals

The School Counselor's Role- Safe Schools/Crisis Response

- Individual and group counseling
- Advocacy for student safety
- Interventions for students at risk
- Peer mediation training, conflict resolution & anti-bullying programs
- Support student initiated programs
- Family, faculty and staff education programs
- Facilitate open communication between students & caring adults
- Defusing critical District & school response team planning/practice
- Partnering with community resources

The School Counselor's Role- Trauma-Informed Practice

- Recognize the signs of trauma
- Create connected communities and positive schools
- Implement effective academic and behavioral practices
- Provide community resource information
- Educate staff on trauma and how to refer students to the SC
- Collaborate with community resources
- Promote a trauma-sensitive framework for policies, procedures and behaviors to entire staff
- Recognize the role technology can play in magnifying trauma incidents for students

A.2. Confidentiality

- k. Recognize the vulnerability of confidentiality in electronic communications and only transmit student information electronically in a way that follows currently accepted security standards and meets federal, state and local laws and board policy.
- l. Convey a student’s highly sensitive information (e.g., a student’s suicidal ideation) through personal contact such as a phone call or visit and not less-secure means such as a notation in the educational record or an e-mail.
- m. Advocate for appropriate safeguards and protocols so highly sensitive student information is not disclosed accidentally to individuals who do not have a need to know such information. **Best practice suggests a very limited number of educators would have access to highly sensitive information on a need-to-know basis.**
- n. Advocate with appropriate school officials for acceptable encryption standards to be utilized for stored data and currently acceptable algorithms to be utilized for data in transit.

The School Counselor’s Responsibilities

Confidentiality

- To support right to privacy, protect confidential information
 - To explain the meaning and limits of confidentiality in developmentally appropriate terms
 - To provide appropriate disclosure and informed consent regarding the counseling relationship and confidentiality
 - To inform students and the family of the limits to confidentiality when:
 - Student poses a danger to self or others
 - Court ordered disclosure
 - Consultation with other professionals
 - Privilege communication not granted by state laws & local guidelines
 - To keep personal notes separate from educational records and not disclose their contents except when privacy exceptions exist.
 - To seek guidance and legal advice when subpoenaed
 - To assert their belief that information shared by students is “confidential” and not be revealed without the student’s consent
 - To adhere to all laws protecting student records, health information, and special services (i.e., HIPAA, FERPA, IDEA)
- Inform parents/guardians and/or appropriate authorities when a student poses a serious and foreseeable risk of harm to self or others.
 - Report risk assessment results to parents to underscore the need to act on behalf of a child at risk
 - Do not release a student who is a danger to self or others until the student has proper and necessary support.
 - Report to parents/guardians and/or appropriate authorities when students disclose a perpetrated or a perceived threat to their physical or mental well-being (i.e., physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, dating violence, bullying or sexual harassment).

A.3. Comprehensive Data-Informed Program

- a. Collaborate with administration, teachers, staff and decision makers around school-improvement goals.
- b. Provide students with a comprehensive school counseling program that ensures equitable academic, career and social/emotional development opportunities for all students.
- c. Review school and student data to assess needs including, but not limited to, data on disparities that may exist related to gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status and/or other relevant classifications.
- d. Use data to determine needed interventions, which are then delivered to help close the information, attainment, achievement and opportunity gaps.
- e. Collect process, perception and outcome data and analyze the data to determine the progress and effectiveness of the school counseling program. School counselors ensure the school counseling program’s goals and action plans are aligned with district’s school improvement goals.
- f. Use data-collection tools adhering to confidentiality standards A.2.
- g. Share data outcomes with stakeholders.

Delivery of School Counseling Services – 80%

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

- Delivering school counseling core curriculum
- Individual student planning
- Responsive services

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

- Referrals for additional assistance
- Consultation and collaboration with families, teachers, other educators and community organizations
- Other activities that fall in line with the appropriate duties of a school counselor as detailed ASCA Position statements and in the ASCA National Model

Inappropriate Activities for School Counselors

- Coordinating paperwork & data entry of all new students
- Coordinating cognitive, aptitude & achievement testing programs
- Signing excuses for students who are tardy or absent
- Performing disciplinary actions or assigning discipline consequences
- Sending students home who are not appropriately dressed
- Teaching classes when teachers are absent
- Computing GPAs
- Maintaining student records
- Supervising classrooms or common areas
- Keeping clerical records
- Assisting with duties in the principal's office
- Providing therapy or long-term counseling in school to address psychological disorders
- Coordinating school-wide individual education plans, student study teams and school attendance review boards
- Serving as a data entry clerk

A.10. Underserved and At-Risk Populations

- a. Strive to contribute to a safe, respectful, nondiscriminatory school environment in which all members of the school community demonstrate respect and civility.
- b. Advocate for and collaborate with students to ensure students remain safe at home and at school. A high standard of care includes determining what information is shared with parents/ guardians and when information creates an unsafe environment for students.
- c. Identify resources needed to optimize education.
- d. Collaborate with parents/guardians, when appropriate, to establish communication and to ensure students' needs are met.
- e. Understand students have the right to be treated in a manner consistent with their gender identity and to be free from any form of discipline, harassment or discrimination based on their gender identity or gender expression.
- f. Advocate for the equal right and access to free, appropriate public education for all youth, in which students are not stigmatized or isolated based on their housing status, disability, foster care, special education status, mental health or any other exceptionality or special need.
- g. Recognize the strengths of students with disabilities as well as their challenges and provide best practices and current research in supporting their academic, career and social/emotional needs.

The School Counselor's Role- Identification, Prevention, & Intervention of Harmful Behaviors That Place Students At-Risk

- Enhance social support through a peer mentoring or buddy system
- Assign adults as monitors or mentors for students
- Provide classroom guidance lessons to increase student knowledge and awareness of the dangers of harmful behaviors as well as promoting resiliency and success skills
- Provide responsive services, including short-term individual, group counseling
- Refer students and families to appropriate support services and community agencies
- Collaborate with school staff to identify and assist students in crisis
- Conduct staff development for school and district staff
- Provide information, consultation, and support to parents/guardians to increase familial involvement
- Advocate for changes in the school and community to promote resilience, success, and equitable access to needed resource

The School Counselor's Role - LGBTQ Youth

- Counsel about sexual orientation and gender identity
- Advocate for equitable educational & extracurricular opportunities
- Advocate for access of building facilities and gender presentation
- Promote policies that effectively reduce use of offensive language, harassment, bullying & improves climate
- Address results of victimization and feeling unsafe at school
- Provide a safe space for LGBTQ students and allies
- Promote sensitivity/acceptance of LGBTQ students & diverse families
- Advocate for rights of families to access and participate in their student's education w/out discrimination
- Support an inclusive curriculum at all grade levels
- Model inclusive language
- Advocate for school policies addressing discrimination; Support students in addressing possible discrimination by staff members
- Encourage staff training on inclusive practices
- Support families whose children are coming out
- Identify LGBTQ community resources

The School Counselor’s Role- Transgender/Gender-nonconforming Youth

- Promote the use of best practices:
- Address students by their chosen name and pronouns that correspond to their gender identity
- When requested, change current unofficial student records with the chosen name and appropriate gender markers to promote consistency among all school personnel.
- When contacting the parent/guardian, use the student’s legal name and the pronoun corresponding to the student’s assigned sex at birth, unless the student or parent/guardian has specified otherwise.
- Students should be allowed to use the restroom in accordance with their gender identity. Any student who has a need or desire for increased privacy has the right to access a single-user restroom.
- Locker-room usage should be determined using the guiding principles of safety and honoring the student’s gender identity and expression.

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/magazine/blogs/september-october-2015/transgender-and-gender-nonconforming-students-adv>

<https://www.nccpsafety.org/resources/library/examples-of-policies-and-emerging-practices-for-supporting-transgender-stud>

The School Counselor’s Role – Children Experiencing Homelessness


- advocate for students and collaborate with their parents/guardians to reduce barriers related to school enrollment and academic success
- establish educational and preventive programs for homeless parents and children
- collaborate with school and community personnel, and coordinate appropriate support services
- increase stakeholder awareness and understanding of the McKinney-Vento Act, and the rights of homeless students.
- advocate for appropriate educational placement

<https://dpi.wi.gov/homeless>

Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY)

NEW

Training Module



The new [training module](#) for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and Education for Homeless Children and Youth is now available!

The School Counselor's Role – Working with Students Experiencing Issues Surrounding Undocumented Status

- Ensure students are not barred from education based on foreign birth certificates, lack of a Social Security number or a home language other than English
- Work with other district personnel, so any information collected is uniformly applied to all students and not used to discriminate or bar certain students access to education
- Help undocumented students gain access to an equitable education that meets their needs and prepares the student for postsecondary access, such as ELL services, if necessary
- Work with school and district personnel to promote awareness and to educate school district personnel, students, parents and the community on policy, procedures and rights of the students and their families and to eliminate discriminatory language and actions regarding these students and their families
- Support families with questions about educational access and rights
- Assist students with seeking postsecondary goals, navigating college access and finding funding for their goals
- Work with community partners and leverage resources to provide support in keeping families intact if possible while supporting students who are separated from a parent due to deportation
- Ensure schools are a safe haven for undocumented students and do not divulge confidential information to any outside agencies without proper legal documentation
- Provide counseling intervention and social/emotional support for students affected by immigration stressors
- Keep abreast of current policies and practices of postsecondary institutions regarding access for undocumented students

A.11. Bullying, Harassment and Child Abuse

- Report to the administration all incidents of bullying, dating violence and sexual harassment. School counselors provide services to victims and perpetrator as appropriate, which may include a safety plan and reasonable accommodations such as schedule change, but school counselors defer to administration for all discipline issues for this or any other federal, state or school board violation.**
- Report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to the proper authorities and take reasonable precautions to protect the privacy of the student for whom abuse or neglect is suspected when alerting the proper authorities.
- Are knowledgeable about current state laws and their school system's procedures for reporting child abuse and neglect and methods to advocate for students' physical and emotional safety following abuse/neglect reports.
- Develop and maintain the expertise to recognize the signs and indicators of abuse and neglect.** Encourage training to enable students and staff to have the knowledge and skills needed to recognize the signs of abuse and neglect and to whom they should report suspected abuse or neglect.

The School Counselor's Role- Promotion of Safe Schools through Conflict Resolution & Bullying/Harassment Prevention

- communication skills
- conflict-resolution skills
- decision-making skills
- development of cultural competence
- acceptance of differences
- intervention strategies for bullying/harassment
- recognition of early warning signs of violence
- prevention/intervention services
- crisis response
- appropriate use of technology and social media
- community involvement
- parent/guardian and faculty/staff education
- evaluation of program effectiveness
- building positive staff and student relationship

A.14 Technical and Digital Citizenship

- c. Promote the safe and responsible use of technology in collaboration educators and families.
- e. School counselors help educate students about appropriate communication and boundaries.



The School Counselor's Role- Student Safety and the Use of Technology

- appropriately respond to online incidents affecting conditions for learning
- assist the community in detecting at-risk behavior and risk-reduction approaches
- address digital citizenship, including technology literacy, privacy, online reputation and social awareness, among students and their families
- develop peer-helper programs encouraging students to help each other understand technological risks, practice responsible use and support other students who are vulnerable
- confront myths surrounding cyberbullying that are perpetuated by media headlines and unsubstantiated public statements like “cyberbullying is occurring at epidemic levels” and “cyberbullying causes suicide”

Application of 2016 ASCA Ethical Standards

Part 2

Common and Challenging Ethical Dilemmas Experienced by Professional School Counselors

	Percentage by School Level		
	Elem. (n=25)	Middle (n=28)	High (n=37)
<i>Most common:</i>			
Dual relationships with faculty	38.5	21.4	5.4
Recommendation writing	0	10.7	24.3
Cultural diversity	23.1	3.6	5.4
Awareness of colleague's ethical breach	26.9	14.3	5.4
Dual relationships with students	3.8	22.2	16.2

	Percentage by School Level		
	Elem. (n=25)	Middle (n=28)	High (n=37)
<i>Most challenging:</i>			
Dual relationships with faculty	30.8	28.6	2.7
Recommendation writing	0	7.1	24.3
Dual relationships with students	0	21.4	10.8
Peer helper programs (including mediation)	11.5	0	2.7
Student confidentiality (personal disclosures)	61.5	46.4	35.1
Parental rights	42.3	39.3	21.6

Bodenhorn, N. (2006). Exploratory Study of Common and Challenging Ethical Dilemmas Experienced by Professional School Counselors. The Professional School Counselor, 10, 2, 195-202.

Ethical decision making in the schools requires:

- Knowledge of the laws
- Ethical codes
- School board/district policies
- Community standards
- Collaboration with peers
- Decision-making model



ASCA's Ethical Decision Making Model 9 steps

1. Define the problem emotionally & intellectually
2. Apply the **ASCA** (& ACA) Ethical Codes and the Law
3. Consider the child's chronological & developmental level
4. Consider the setting, parental rights & minors' rights
5. Apply ethical principles- **Beneficence** ("do good");
Autonomy (promote student choice); **Nonmaleficence** ("do no harm");
Justice (equity, fairness); **Loyalty** (connectedness, availability to student)
6. Determine potential courses of action and consequences
7. Evaluate the selected action
8. Consult with fellow and experienced professionals
9. Implement (follow up and assess effects)

Practice Scenario: Testifying in court, private vs public notes & privileged communication

"This past school year I had a young student disclose to me that a family member sexually assaulted her. I informed the parents and reported the abuse to the proper authorities. The case is going to court and I have been subpoenaed to testify. I want to help this student find justice, yet I am concerned about the importance of respecting the necessity for confidentiality between students and school counselors. I am unsure if the ethical standard of confidentiality applies here."

Sources:

ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors. (2016).
American School Counselor Association.

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/Ethics/EthicalStandards2016.pdf>

ASCA Position Statements (2016). American School
Counselor Association.

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors-members/publications/position-statements>