

The COMPLICATIONS of Working with Minors in a School Setting
(Stone, 2005; 2010; 2013)

COUNSELOR'S VALUES

We are our values. We are not able to leave our values at the school house door. However, professional schools counselors are aware of those value-laden issues for which they cannot be objective (our hot buttons) and we avoid working with students who are in the throes of a situation involving our hot buttons. For example, if a school counselor is vehemently opposed to abortion, then s/he recognizes this and refers a student who is seeking help on this topic to another professional. It is unethical for us to impose our values on our students in value-laden controversial topics. Our ethical imperative guides us to promote the autonomy and independence of our students.

Grossman v. Southshore Community School District

OBLIGATIONS BEYOND THE STUDENT

We owe our students a trusting relationship. The ASCA Ethical Standards dictate that school counselors have a primary obligation and loyalty to students. Yet, we also have an obligation to parents, teachers, administrators, the school district, and the community. School counselors respect students' confidences and balance the rights of minors with the rights of their parents. The ambiguity of protecting students' trust in their school counselor and promoting students' autonomy while respecting parental rights to be the guiding voice in their children's lives is a daily struggle. Parents are continually vested by our courts with legal rights to guide their children (*Bellotti v. Baird*, 1979; *H. L. v. Matheson*, 1981).

The COMPLICATIONS of Working with Minors in a School Setting

Counselor's Values

Obligations Extend to Parents and Other Educators

Minors' Developmental and Chronological Levels

Privacy Rights of Minors

Legal Status of Minors

In Loco Parentis

Community and Institutional Standards

Academic Instruction

Trusting Relationship

Informed Consent

Opacity of Laws and Ethical Codes

Number of Students

Standard of Care

In *H. L. V. Matheson*, The Supreme Court Of The United States said "constitutional interpretation has consistently recognized that the parents' claim to authority in their own household to direct the rearing of their children is basic in the structure of our society." The Supreme Court emphasized that there are three reasons why parents are the guiding voice in their children's live:

1. The peculiar vulnerability of minors to make life altering decisions;
2. A minor's inability to make informed, competent decisions, particularly under emotional stress; and,
3. The concept that parents are the guiding voice in their child's life.

Bellotti v. Baird

We have recognized that parents have an important "guiding role" to play in the upbringing of their children, *Bellotti II, supra*, at 633-639, which presumptively includes counseling them on important decisions.

MINORS' DEVELOPMENTAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL LEVELS

The competency and developmental levels of minors cannot be attached neatly to a chronological age. For example, middle schoolers may present themselves developmentally as a mature 13 year old only to surprise us with behavior typical of a nine-year-old the next day. School counselors' sensitivity to the unique and holistic picture of each student is an important consideration when dealing with the ambiguities of legal and ethical issues.

Clear Imminent Danger or Reasonable and Foreseeable Harm

PRIVACY RIGHTS

The privacy rights of minors belong to the student's parents/guardians.

Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 1984) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA, 2000), two federal statutes provide guidance. It is the parent and not the student who makes critical decisions about disclosure of personal information. Parents have the final word in who will know about certain of their child's medical conditions such as HIV+ status. Unless an entity is covered by FERPA such as a receiving school, it is parent and not the student who must give permission to release educational records.

LEGAL STATUS OF MINORS

The legal status of minors is difficult to define. A minor is generally defined as someone under the age of 18. All minors share the legal characteristic that they are unable to make decisions on their own behalf. Minors are a group of individuals with complicated legal status that maintains a dependency on adults for privilege and access to resources.

IN LOCO PARENTIS

Another complication of working with minors in a school setting is the interpretation of the common-law doctrine *in loco parentis*, which at times, allows school personnel to act in place of the parent. Common-law thinking on this issue has prevailed for many years. The Wisconsin Supreme Court recognized that educators must be able to address the diversity of expectations placed upon them and have sufficient control over the decorum and climate of the school to ensure that learning can take place (State ex rel. Burpee v. Burton, 45 Wis. 150, 30 Am. Rep. 706 (1878)). Inherent in this thinking is the necessity that educators, by virtue of their positions, have the authority to govern school in a reasonable and humane manner (Edwards, 1955). {G}eneral education and control of pupils who attend public schools are in the hands of school boards, superintendents, principals, and teachers and [school counselors]. This control extends to health, proper surroundings, necessary discipline, promotion of morality, and other wholesome influences, while parental authority is temporarily superseded (Richardson v. Braham, 125 Neb 142, 249 N.W. 557 (1933)). Educators have an ethical obligation to promote harmony in the school while simultaneously advancing and protecting students' interests.

Eisel v Montgomery County BOE

COMMUNITY AND INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS

As difficult as it is to accept, ethical are situational. Your ethical behavior is determined in large part by where your school is located. This flies in the face of the school counselor as advocate and purveyor of

justice. However, the prevailing community and institutional standard do dictate to a large degree what school counselors can do and remain ethical.

We cry out, “the support we give students should not depend on the values of the community!” We fight against the notion of treating students differently based on their zip code. As much as it might pain us, we have to know and be respectful of the wishes of the community in which we take a position. In some communities the school counselor could direct a student to a health clinic for contraceptives or could recruit for a support groups for gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender (g/l/b/t) students. Whereas, in other areas of the country these activities would be a breach of ethics and cross the line against the community and/or institutional standards.

School counselors as leaders and advocates behave as change agents when the community and institutions’ standards of behavior adversely stratify students’ opportunities, then our ethical standards and codes give us a directive to act responsibly to try and change those policies and practices that impede student success (ASCA, 2004). The message here is to understand the prevailing written and unwritten standards of the community, school district, and individual work site and behave consistently within the parameters of those standards while working responsibly to change the ones that hurt students.

Port Washington Pregnancy Policy

ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION

The setting in which school counselors work defines the student-school counselor relationship. School counselors work in a setting designed for academic instruction. Parents send their children to school for curriculum instruction and when children’s emotional needs are being addressed by school counselors, conflict can result between the parents’ right to know what is happening in their child’s life and a student’s right to privacy.

TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP

The school counselor must provide a safe and secure environment in which trust can be established and maintained. Without the assurance of confidentiality, many students would not seek help. Counselors must keep confidential information related to counseling services unless disclosure is in the best interest of students or is required by law.

INFORMED CONSENT

The ASCA Ethical Standards (2010) tell us that the professional school counselor must give informed consent at the beginning of counseling sessions. The purpose of inform the counselee of the purposes, goals, techniques, and rules of procedure under which she/he may receive counseling at or before the time when the counseling relationship is entered. The meaning of confidentiality is given in developmentally appropriate terms and helps the student understand that school counselors will try to keep confidences except when the student is a danger to self or others; the student or parent requests that information be revealed or a court orders a counselor to disclose the information.

Incest Survivors Group

OPACITY OF LAWS AND ETHICAL CODES

The multifaceted nature of working with minors in schools makes it difficult to develop law, ethical codes, written school board policies, or procedures for all the potential variables and situations faced by school counselors. For example, laws that address malpractice, negligence and student privacy rights are complex. Laws are often defined by a court on a case by case basis. . Federal Courts in each state can interpret the same law in different ways from state to state and the interpretation will remain unresolved until a higher court can hear the matter, if ever. Although there is some legal guidance in education law, state department regulations and local and school board policy, school counselors often have to practice in absence of clear-cut guidelines.

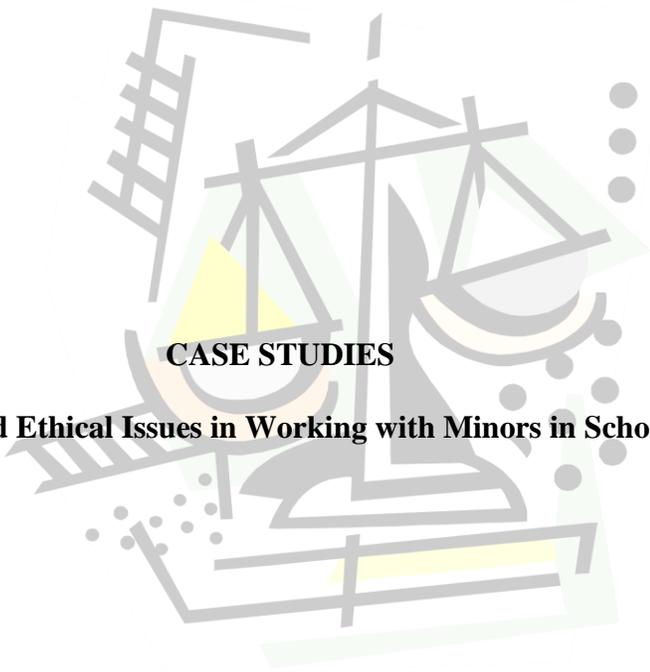
NUMBER OF STUDENT-CLIENTS

The very nature of our role as school counselors impacts our legal and ethical obligations. As leaders, advocates, and change agents we are charged with reaching every student but the multiplicity of our role and the obligations we have to so many considerable reduce the amount of consideration and supervision we can give to each student, the extent to which we can document what we have done, and the effort we can undertake to see to each and every child's individual needs. Caseloads do not spell the difference between a counselor who behaves professionally, ethically, and legally and one who does not, however, caseloads influence the thoroughness school counselors devote to each case.

STANDARD OF CARE

Standard of care is defined as what the reasonably competent professional would do. Standard of care is context specific. Negligence cases are founded on the assumption that the standard of care was not met. If you get into legal hot water, your attorney will want to demonstrate that you behaved as any other person in your profession would have. The following criteria are just a few pieces of information your legal council will gather to show that you behaved within the standard of care for your profession:





CASE STUDIES

Legal and Ethical Issues in Working with Minors in Schools

Carolyn Stone, Ed.D., Counselor Educator, University of North Florida, Jacksonville, Florida, cstone@unf.edu (former Middle School Teacher, Elementary and High School Counselor, Supervisor of Guidance for Jacksonville, and Certified School Psychologist)

2006 President of American School Counselor Association
ASCA Ethics Chair

CASE 1 Legally Speaking: Legitimate Educational Interest

Your cousin coaches Little League baseball. He would like information on a student in your school that he coaches. He is very fond of the young man who seems to be having vision difficulty. The coach asked the boy's parents about his problem and the parents dismissed it with "he can see, he is just uncoordinated." Your cousin would like for you to look at the vision screening results in this child's student record to see if a problem has been noted. Is there an ethical or legal dilemma here?

Legitimate Educational Interest-

1. Perform appropriate tasks within the person's job description
2. Perform a task related to a student's education
3. Perform task related to discipline
4. Provide a service or benefit relating to the student to student family such as counseling, health care or job placement

CASE 2 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

Mrs. Shubuta complains to you that her child is being humiliated and his privacy rights violated

because his teacher has the students exchange papers to grade and the students then call out the grades for recording. Her child has serious learning difficulties and his grades are always very low. She says her lawyer has explained that FERPA rights are violated because his grades are educational records. Is her lawyer right?

Points to Consider

Supreme Court Case *Owasso Public Schools v. Falvo*

Homework assignments and tests and grades assigned to them are not education records because they are not “maintained”

Once recorded in the teacher's grade book then the grades are “maintained.”

What is your advocacy role?

CASE 3 Falsifying Student Records

You are a school counselor. You enjoy the role of accomplishing the impossible to help your high school students get scholarships. Bert, one of your seniors, is a talented rower who is being recruited by the six universities in the country who offer rowing scholarships. Bert dropped physics in his junior year so that he could pick up weight lifting to help his rowing. The recruiting schools require four years of science and the coach encourages you to “get physics on the transcript **somehow**.” Bert needs this scholarship and a chance at the future. You put physics on the transcript. Bert gets his scholarship. Did the end justify the means?

Your state Professional Practices Commission recommends that you not be fired. Can you be fired by your school district anyway? Can you be sued and found guilty for giving Bert (see previous case) incorrect information?

Points to Consider

Sain v. Cedar Rapids School District

Negligent Misrepresentation if you know a student has a need for information and you supply that information knowing they are relying on this information and it is inaccurate.

Brown v Compton Unified School District

Demonstrates the reluctance of the courts to find educational malpractice

CASE 4 Step Parents, Non custodial Parents

Rights for Non-custodial Parents

Justina has a history of emotional problems and conflicts with her mother and is often in your office distraught over the latest verbal bout with her mother. A teacher comes to you worried about a seemingly depressed Justina who “is not herself.” When you talk to Justina you too become worried as she appears withdrawn, distracted and depressed. You suggest to Justina that you need to involve her mother so that she can get some help but she begs you to call her father (the noncustodial parent) instead of her mother. Justina’s mother calls you furious that you

contacted Justina's father and says she is refusing to allow you or any other school representative to ever again contact the father. Must you abide by the mother's dictate? Can you call the non-custodial parent about a social-emotional issue involving their child?

Points to Consider

You may contact the parent who is not the primary custodial parent and involve the parent in an academic or emotional issue.

Page v. Rotterdam-Mohonasen Central School District

Non-custodial parents enjoy all the same rights as custodial parents unless there is a court order expressly stating otherwise.

CASE 5 Parents Disagree on Educational Programs

One parent wants special education placement for their child and one parent disagrees.

Points to Consider

One parent can sign for special education placement and home schooling.

One parent can decide who will pick up the child from school.

CASE 6 Confidential Testimony

You are a school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, school nurse, or mental health therapist. You have been subpoenaed to provide testimony in a child custody case involving a thirteen-year-old you are counseling. You are asked to disclose information that you consider confidential. What do you do?

Points to Consider

Privilege Communication is a rule of evidence and a creature of statute

Confidentiality is every counselor's ethical obligation and in many states it is a legal obligation

CASE 7 Suicide

A fourteen-year-old middle school student reports to you that Sarah, a counselee of your colleague Mr. Barnes, is involved in Satanism and has entered a murder-suicide pact with another student. You and Mr. Barnes call Sarah in and she vehemently denies the allegations and even scoffs at the idea that she would ever be involved in a cult. She convinces you. Do you have any further obligations in this case?

Points to Consider

-A duty was owed

-The duty owed was breached

-There was sufficient casual connection between breach and injury

Standard of Care

-codes

-credentialing bodies

-school board or agency policies

-Injuries were suffered

-civil laws, criminal laws

Eisel vs. Montgomery County Board of Education

-court cases

-expert witnesses

CASE 8 Sexually Active Teens

You are a school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, or licensed mental health therapist employed by a (local school district, community agency). You are counseling a young woman who is 15 and sexually active. Should you notify her parents that their daughter is sexually active?

Points to Consider

Revisit the complications of working with minors in schools.

CASE 9 Abortion Counseling

A seventeen-year-old woman tells you she is pregnant and asks for your advice as to whether she should have an abortion. What should you do?

14 A The above minor is thirteen-years-old?

14 B (The above scenario, yet add this information...) You are vehemently opposed to abortion. What do you do?

Points to Consider

Arnold v. Escambia County Board of Education

11th Circuit Court of Appeals remanded the case to trial

Principle involved: Constitutional Rights would be violated if it were found that there was coercion.

CASE 10 GLBTQ Students

A principal has called two girls into his office that was making out in the hallways. Despite their protest he calls their parents to tell them the code of conduct they violated and the gender of the partner. One student's parent sues for breach of her child's privacy rights. Did her daughter give up her privacy rights when she made out with her girlfriend in the hallway?

Court Cases to Consider

- Wisconsin, 1996: Jamie Nabozny was awarded \$962,000, for injuries he suffered while at Ashland Middle School and Ashland High School. This was the first time a federal jury found school officials responsible for anti-gay harassment committed by students. In addition to verbally abusing him, Nabozny said other students kicked him, urinated on him, and in one incident, pretended to rape him. One attack left him in need of surgery.
- Illinois, 1996: The Riverside-Brookfield School District settled a lawsuit filed by

the family of a gay student who alleged that school officials did not act on his complaints of abuse from other students.

- Washington, D.C., 1997: The U.S. Department of Education issued guidelines spelling out that gay and lesbian students are covered by federal prohibitions against sexual harassment.
- Arkansas, 1998: Following a complaint from a gay student who said he endured two years of abuse from other students, the Fayetteville School District signed an agreement with the U.S. Department of Education to hold sexual harassment workshops for teachers and students, take disciplinary action against any student “reported and confirmed to have engaged in sexually harassing behavior.”

CASE 11 Teacher on Student Sexual Abuse

You coach tennis in the high school where you are a counselor. You have heard rumors that the volleyball coach is having an affair with one of her students. After an unscheduled tennis practice with two of your students you enter the coaches’ office and hear the frantic rustling of clothes and hushed whispers. After five minutes this coach and student emerge from behind closed doors and she mumbles something about looking for equipment and they hurry out. You are certain that your unscheduled appearance in the coaches’ office has interrupted a sexual encounter. You confront this coach who does not deny the allegation. Now what do you do?

Points to Consider

- X Absolute Duty to Report
- X Certainly is not required- suspicion is enough to establish a duty
- X Duty is not discretionary it is inextricably clear
- X Report within 48 hours
- X Good faith reporting is assumed
- X If a record is required by the school, the name of the reporter can be deleted
- X No statute of limitations on Child Abuse Reporting

CASE 12 Group Work

You are working with a young woman who reveals she is a victim of incest that ended five years ago. You are already working with another young woman who is dealing with the same issue. After several months you decide it would be in the best interest of these two girls to bring them together. You also include 2 other young women who are incest victims, have been through years of counseling and are progressing well. You bring these four students together for weekly group counseling. You spend a great deal of time on the issue of confidentiality at the first meeting. You are comfortable that the students all understand the imperative to keep all revelations confidential. Is there an ethical dilemma here?

Points to Consider

ASCA Ethical Standard A.6.c. “establishes clear expectations in the group setting and clearly states that confidentiality in group counseling cannot be guaranteed. Given the developmental

and chronological ages of minors in schools, the counselor recognizes the tenuous nature of confidentiality for minors renders some topics inappropriate for group work in a school setting.”

We must continually ask ourselves, “will the potential emotional cost to students and their families be worth any gains that we may accomplish?”

Competence

Developmental and chronological levels of students

Setting

Debates: Take a Stand

1) *A student confided in his teacher that he was a homosexual and that he was having a difficult time negotiating a same sex relationship. The student responded to his teacher's prompt that he would feel comfortable talking to you, the school counselor, about his difficulties in his relationship. You inform the teacher that due to a conflict in your values you will be unable to provide counseling services to this student and since there are no other counselors in the school you will find an outside referral resource for this student. Are there any legal and ethical concerns regarding your behavior?*

2) *As a form of punishment, Mrs. Johnson recently had a child use his nose to hold a quarter against the wall. Each time the quarter fell she added time to the punishment. The parents were furious. Subsequently, the principal has spent many hours dealing with central administration, the parents and teacher to find a resolution. One of the solutions to the problem is that he has asked you to work with Mrs. Johnson on her classroom management skills.*

3) *Justina has a history of emotional problems and conflicts with her mother and is often in your office distraught over the latest verbal bout with her mother. A teacher comes to you worried about a seemingly depressed Justina who “is not herself.” When you talk to Justina you too become worried as she appears withdrawn, distracted and depressed. You suggest to Justina that you need to involve her mother so that she can get some help but she begs you to call her father (the noncustodial parent) instead of her mother. Justina’s mother calls you furious that you contacted Justina’s father and says she is refusing to allow you or any other school representative to ever again contact the father. Must you abide by the mother’s dictate? Can you call the non-custodial parent about a social-emotional issue involving their child?*

4) *A 32 year old high school coach/teacher was fired for sending his 20 year old girlfriend a sex text message. Parents found it and sent it to his principal and the superintendent. She is a former student in his school and her sister is still there. School board time and property were not used when sending the text. He can and was legally fired. That is not the question. Was this something the school system should have taken a hands off approach to or was it their business*

to involve themselves in this situation?

5) A student received from you a strong letter of recommendation regarding his character, service, leadership, and academic record. Mark, the student, was accepted by his first choice college who subsequently received Mark's midterm report showing all A's. In April it was discovered that Mark and two others had exchanged papers during a test during the first semester of Trigonometry. All three students were disciplined and once the zero grade was factored into the final grade, the result was a drop by two letters to a C. Are you under any legal or ethical obligation to report the cheating incident to the college? Will you be breaching any legal or ethical obligation if you do report the cheating incident to the college? Will you call the college and let them know about the cheating?

6) A student of yours is in foster care and has never had anyone support just him at his wrestling matches. Mothers and dads show up but never anyone for him. You decide to go to his match this Saturday in a town 3 hours away. You will drive alone and return alone. Are you going? Are you not going? Why or why not?

7) Your fellow school counseling associate works in the same district as you do? She wants me to work with her child in my private practice. Are there any legal and/or ethical considerations?

8) Your principal is a very strong minded person and you have learned to have a wonderful professional relationship. She leaves the back door of her office open and it faces the inside of the suite and is smack at your front door. When people come in to talk to her they believe it is private so you shut your door or take this time to do your runs to classrooms etc so that you are not hearing private conversations. Today the head of special education comes in and starts complaining about "lack of services from the school counselor" (you). Do you sit and listen, close your door as normal, or confront by making your presence known (this last choice will probably not be appreciated by the principal)?

9) You and a student have been keeping a joint journal for five weeks because the student has difficulty getting along with her teachers. The student was searched and all her possessions seized including the journal when it was discovered she had written a threatening note against her teacher. The note was not written in the journal but the principal and the school resource officer and subsequently the police all read the journal and found a questionable entry by the student, "The way teachers treat students it is no wonder why some students want to harm their teachers." You never reported this to anyone and took great offense that the journal is being used against the student. What is your reaction to this scenario?

10) Your 16-year-old student is in constant emotional turmoil because of her parents impending divorce. The student just found out she is 6 weeks pregnant and she plans to have an abortion. She refuses to tell her parents a, "it will put even more stress on the family and I cannot do that to them. If I am good maybe this can all work out between them." Discuss this through the

ethical decision making model.

11) You are seeing a student who lives with his mother, a single parent. When the student's mother meets with you she reveals she has a substance abuse problem. Do you ask questions about what she is abusing? Do you inquire about frequency? Do you give her resources? DO you call child protective services? Do you move on to the next topic? Your reaction.

12) You are dating the parent of a student in your school. The student is not someone you have worked with individually. You take a week-long vacation with the mother and her three daughters to another state. You buy joint rooms so that the daughters can be close by. Is there anything wrong with your relationship with this mother?

Sexually Active Students

Carolyn Stone, University of North Florida Professor, ASCA Ethics Committee Chair,
cstone@unf.edu

1. DISTRICT POLICY AND STUDENT PREGNANCY

Your school district was challenged by an angry parent who felt her daughter's school counselor should have informed her when her daughter sought counseling about her pregnancy. In response the district has verbally issued a new policy saying that school counselors must try to get a student to inform their parents about their pregnancy and, failing this, school counselors must themselves inform parents. Are there any legal or ethical concerns regarding this policy?

2. PREGNANT STUDENTS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Your assistant principal comes to you and asks you for a list of all students in the school you know are pregnant. He explains that he wants to notify these students about an alternative school for pregnant and parenting teens and encourage them to transfer. Do you have any concerns about this request? Must you comply with this request?

3. DISTRICT POLICY AND STUDENT PREGNANCY

Your school district was challenged by an angry parent who felt her daughter's school counselor should have informed her when her daughter sought counseling about her pregnancy. In response the district has verbally issued a new policy saying that school counselors must try to get a student to inform their parents about their pregnancy and failing this they must themselves inform parents. Are there any legal or ethical concerns regarding this policy?

4. PREGNANCY AS A TEMPORARY DISABILITY

Your administration asked you to "convince" Erika, a pregnant student, to attend the Pregnant and Parenting Teens alternative school. You have a relationship with Erika and you have been helping her stay on track, as she is often absent due to her morning sickness and doctors appointments. It has been a struggle; her teachers are very reluctant to give her make-up work because they believe that she should not let morning sickness keep her from her obligations. Teachers are condemning her absences with comments such as, "Well I had four kids and I never missed a day of work because of my morning sickness." You are growing weary of nudging, begging, cajoling the teachers into providing work and you are beginning to agree that it would be better for all if she did go to the alternative program. Up to this point Erika has expressed a desire to stay in her current school. You are considering using your relationship with Erika to influence her to change schools. What are your legal and ethical obligations to Erika?

5. PERSONAL PRIVACY RIGHTS

A middle school counselor received a report that it was being whispered about the halls that a certain young woman is pregnant. The counselor calls the student in and asked her to confirm or deny the rumors. The student said she was unsure but thought she might be pregnant. The counselor provided a pregnancy test and strongly urged the student to take it in the staff restroom to which the student complied. Is this school counselor's behavior problematic?

6. HELPING A SEXUALLY ACTIVE STUDENT GET MEDICAL CARE

You are a middle school counselor in a high-poverty, rural area in which teenage pregnancy is common. Fourteen-year-old Jessica comes to you distraught over a fight she has had with her boyfriend, Michael. In the course of the counseling session, the student reveals that she and Michael are sexually active, and she is terrified of getting pregnant. You encourage Jessica to seek help from her parents or a close relative, but she says that is out of the question. Jessica refuses to meet with the school nurse, explaining that she trusts only you. You are convinced that without your help, Jessica will never visit a clinic. You make an appointment for her, and, with Jessica's approval, call Michael's mother to take her to the clinic. When Michael's mother refuses, you agree to transport Jessica to the clinic. Can you transport a student to a clinic for the purpose of receiving birth control? Are you required to notify the parents of students who are engaged in unprotected sex?

7. SAFE HAVEN LAWS

In an effort to protect newborns from being discarded, as in cases of babies being found in dumpsters and public restrooms, most states have passed laws allowing birth mothers to leave their newborns at hospitals, fire stations,

police stations and other select safe havens for abandoned babies. The understanding is that no questions will be asked and the mother is relinquishing any legal rights to the child. Your sister works with social services and continually tells you about the incidence in your community of abandoned babies left in harm's way. You want to advertise the state law on bulletin boards throughout your school in an effort to protect newborns. Your principal will not allow any reference to this law to be displayed in the school. Her concern is that this law sends the message to students that they can be irresponsible, have unprotected sex and then fix an unwanted pregnancy by abandoning their "problem." The principal says that the only involvement your school will have with the subject of teenage sexual relations is to promote and implement the district's abstinence-based curriculum. What should your approach be moving forward with this issue? Are there ways to educate teens about sex while preserving the spirit of district policy?

IF TIME PERMITS

8. DEVELOPMENTALLY DELAYED, PREGNANT STUDENTS

Sharon is slightly developmentally delayed. Chronologically Sharon is 14, but developmentally she is more like an 11 or 12 year old. Sharon is pregnant, and her mother is aware of the pregnancy. Sharon has long been a concern of everyone in the school. She is unkempt, unclean, explosive, and violent. Her developmental problems mean she is always out of synch with her age group. Her peers avoid her because they are afraid of her. You are horrified that she will now be responsible for a baby. Sharon is not capable of taking care of herself, and you fear for the safety of her child. She tells you she is going to have her baby because this will bring the father of the baby back to her. Sharon says her mother will help her raise the baby. She talks excitedly and animatedly about how she has "always wanted a baby." She explains that her cousin, who is also 14, has a baby and is doing quite well. The baby has beautiful clothes, and her cousin dresses the baby up for church every Sunday. She talks at length about how everyone comes up to the baby and makes a big deal over the baby. What is your reaction to this situation? What steps would you take in this case?