

## Preamble

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is a professional organization supporting school counselors, school counseling students/interns, school counseling program directors/supervisors and school counselor educators. These standards are the ethical responsibility of all school counseling professionals.

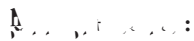
School counselors have unique qualifications and skills to implement a comprehensive school counseling program that addresses pre-K–12 students' academic, career and social/emotional development needs. School counselors are leaders, advocates, collaborators and consultants who create systemic change to ensure equitable educational outcomes through the school counseling program. School counselors demonstrate the belief that all students have the ability to learn by advocating for and contributing to an education system that provides optimal learning environments for all students.

All students have the right to:

- Be respected and treated with dignity.
- A physically and emotionally safe, inclusive and healthy school environment, both in-person and through digital platforms, free from abuse, bullying, harassment, discrimination and any other forms of violence.
- Equitable access to a school counseling program that promotes academic, career and social/emotional development and improves student outcomes for all students, including students historically and currently marginalized by the education system.

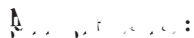
- f. Do not diagnose but recognize how a student's diagnosis and environment can potentially affect the student's access, participation and ability to achieve academic, postsecondary and social/emotional success.
- g. Acknowledge the vital role and rights of parents/guardians, families and tribal communities.
- h. Respect students' and families' values, beliefs and cultural background, as well as students' sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, and exercise great care to

### **A.3. Comprehensive School Counseling Program**



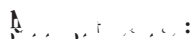
- a. Provide students with a culturally responsive school counseling program that promotes academic, career and social/emotional development and equitable opportunity and achievement outcomes for all students.
- b. Collaborate with administration, teachers, staff and stakeholders for equitable school improvement goals.
- c. Use data-collection tools adhering to standards of confidentiality as expressed in A.2.
- d. Review and use school and student data to assess and address needs, including but not limited to data on strengths and disparities that may exist related to gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability and/or other relevant classifications.
- e. Deliver research-based interventions to help close achievement, attainment, information, attendance, discipline, resource and opportunity gaps.
- f. Collect and analyze participation, ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors and outcome data to determine the progress and effectiveness of the school counseling program.
- g. Share data outcomes with stakeholders.

### **A.4. Academic, Career and Social/Emotional Planning**



- a. Collaborate with a community of stakeholders to create a culture of postsecondary readiness.
- b. Provide and advocate for all students' pre-K–postsecondary career awareness, exploration, and postsecondary planning and decision-making to support students' right to choose from the wide array of career and postsecondary options, including but not limited to college/university, career and technical school, military or workforce.
- c. Identify and examine gaps in college and career access and address both intentional and unintentional biases in postsecondary and career counseling.
- d. Provide opportunities for all students to develop a positive attitude toward learning, effective learning strategies, self-management and social skills and an understanding that lifelong learning is part of long-term career success.
- e. Address their personal biases related to students' postsecondary choices.
- f. Address any inequitable systemic policies and practices related to students' postsecondary choices.

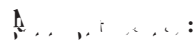
### **A.5. Sustaining Healthy Relationships and Managing Boundaries**



- a. Engage in professional roles and relationships with students and stakeholders that foster wellness and student success.

- b. Recognize that establishing credibility, rapport and an effective working alliance with some students and stakeholders may be facilitated by developing relationships that extend beyond the school day and building (e.g., attending community events, advocating for community improvement for and with students and stakeholders, joining community enhancement organizations).
- c. Assess potential risks and benefits prior to extending relationships beyond the school building and school hours (e.g., attending students off-site extracurricular activities, celebrations honoring students, hospital visits, funerals).
- d. Document the nature of relationship extensions, including the rationale, potential benefit and possible consequences for the student and school counselor.
- e. Act to eliminate and/or reduce the potential for harm to students and stakeholders in any relationships or interactions by using safeguards, such as informed consent, consultation, supervision and documentation.
- f. Prevent potential harm to students and stakeholders with whom the school counselor's judgment may be compromised (e.g., family members, children of close friends) by helping facilitate the provision of alternative services or resources when available.
- g. Adhere to legal, ethical, district and school policies and guidelines regarding relationships with students and stakeholders.
- h. Refrain from the use of personal social media, text and email accounts to interact with students unless sanctioned by the school district. Adhere to legal, ethical, district and school policies and guidelines when using technology with students and stakeholders.
- i. Avoid inappropriate roles and relationships such as providing direct discipline, teaching courses that involve grading students and accepting administrative duties in the absence of an administrator.
- j. Strive to avoid a conflict of interest through self-promotion that would benefit the school counselor personally and/or financially (e.g., advertising their products and/or services).

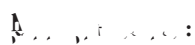
### **A.6. Appropriate Collaboration, Advocacy and Referrals for Counseling**



- a. Collaborate with all relevant stakeholders, including students, school faculty/staff and parents/guardians, when students need assistance, including when early warning signs of student distress are identified.
- b. Provide a list of outside agencies and resources in their community, or the closest available, to students and parents/guardians when students need or request additional support. School counselors provide multiple referral options or the district-vetted list of referrals options and are careful not to indicate an endorsement or preference for one individual or practice. School counselors encourage parents/guardians to research outside professionals' skills/experience to inform their personal decision regarding the best source of assistance for their student.

- c. Connect students with services provided through the local school district and community agencies and remain aware of state laws and local district policies related to students with special needs, including limits to confidentiality and notification to authorities as appropriate.
- d. Develop a plan for the transitioning of primary counseling services with minimal interruption of services. Students retain the right for the referred services to be conducted in coordination with the school counselor or to discontinue counseling services with the school counselor while maintaining an appropriate relationship that may include participation in other school support services.
- e. Refrain from referring students based solely on the school counselor's personal beliefs or values rooted in one's religion, culture, ethnicity or personal worldview. School counselors maintain the highest respect for student cultural identities and worldviews. School counselors pursue additional training and supervision when their values are discriminatory in nature (e.g., sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, reproductive rights, race, religion, ability status). School counselors do not impose their values on students and/or families when making referrals to outside resources for student and/or family support.
- f. Attempt to establish a collaborative relationship with outside service providers to best serve students. Request a release of information signed by the student and/or parents/guardians before attempting to collaborate with the student's external provider.
- g. Provide internal and external service providers with accurate and meaningful data necessary to adequately assess, counsel and assist students.
- h. Ensure there is not a conflict of interest in providing referral resources. School counselors do not refer or accept a referral to counsel students from their school if they also work in a private counseling practice.

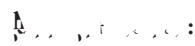
### **A.7. Group Work**



- a. Offer culturally sustaining small-group counseling services based on individual student, school and community needs; student data; a referral process; and/or other relevant data.
- b. Provide equitable access to participation in groups, including alleviating physical, language and other obstacles.
- c. Assess student needs to determine if participating in the group is appropriate for the student.
- d. Inform parents/guardians of student participation in and the purpose of the small group.
- e. Facilitate short-term groups to address students' academic achievement, postsecondary and career exploration, and social/emotional well-being.
- f. Use data to inform group topics, establish well-defined expectations and measure the outcomes of group participation.
- g. Reflect on group outcomes and determine adjustments that may improve future group interventions.

- h. Communicate the aspiration of confidentiality as a group norm, while recognizing and working from the protective posture that confidentiality for students in small groups cannot be guaranteed.
- i. Select topics for groups with the clear understanding that some topics are not suitable for groups in schools (e.g., incest survivorship, eating disorders, dating violence) and accordingly take precautions to protect members from harm as a result of interactions with the group.
- j. Facilitate culturally sustaining groups from the framework of evidence-based or research-based practices.
- k. Practice within their competence level and develop professional competence through training and supervision.
- l. Provide necessary follow-up and/or referrals to additional resources for group members.

### **A.8. Student Peer-Support Program**



- a. Share the student peer-support program's goal and purpose with stakeholders.
- b. Safeguard the welfare of students participating in peer-to-peer programs under their direction.
- c. Strive to protect the confidentiality of students receiving peer support services by not sharing or disclosing personal information (e.g., special education services, academic information).
- d. Work to select peer helpers who reflect the diversity of the population to be served.
- e. Facilitate equitable access, representation and cultural sustainability in peer-support programs.
- f. Develop, train and supervise students in school counseling peer-support programs, using culturally relevant frameworks that promote inclusion and belonging.
- g. Inform peer-support students about when students need to report information to a responsible adult at school.

### **A.9. Serious and Foreseeable Harm to Self and Others**



- a. Inform parents/guardians and school administration when a student poses a serious and foreseeable risk of harm to self or others. This notification is to be done after careful deliberation and consultation with appropriate professionals, such as other school counselors, the school nurse, school psychologist, school social worker, school resource officer or child protective services. Even if the danger appears relatively remote, parents/guardians must be notified. The consequence of the risk of not giving parents/guardians a chance to intervene on behalf of their child is too great.
- b. Recognize the level of suicide risk (e.g., low, medium, high) is difficult to accurately quantify. If required to use a risk assessment, it must be completed with the realization that it is an information-gathering tool and only one element in the risk-assessment process. When reporting risk-assessment

results to parents/guardians, school counselors do not negate the risk of students' potential harm to self even if the assessment reveals a low risk, as students may minimize risk to avoid further scrutiny and/or parental/guardian notification. The purpose of reporting any risk-assessment results to parents/guardians is to underscore the need for parents/guardians to act, not to report a judgment of risk.

- c. Collaborate with school administration to ensure a student has proper supervision and support. If parents/guardians will not provide proper support, the school counselor takes necessary steps to underscore to parents/guardians the necessity to seek help and, at times, may include a report to child protective services.
- d. Provide culturally responsive mental health resources to parents/guardians.
- e. Report to administration and/or appropriate authorities (e.g., law enforcement) when a student discloses a perpetrated or a perceived threat to another person's physical or mental well-being. This threat may include but is not limited to verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, dating violence, bullying or harassment. The school counselor follows applicable federal and state laws and school and district policy.

## **A.10. Marginalized Populations**

### **Advocacy**

- a. Advocate with and on behalf of students to ensure they remain safe at home, in their communities 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.
- b. Actively work to establish a safe, equitable, affirming school environment in which all members of the school community demonstrate respect, inclusion and acceptance.
- c. Identify and advocate for resources needed to optimize and support academic, career and social/emotional development opportunities.
- d. Collaborate with parents/guardians when appropriate

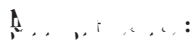
## A.12 Child Abuse

### Standards:

- a. Report to the proper authorities, as mandated by the state, all suspected cases of child abuse and neglect, recognizing that certainty is not required, only reasonable suspicion. School counselors are held to a higher standard regarding their absolute duty as a mandated reporter to report suspected child abuse and neglect.
- b. Develop and maintain the expertise to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect. Advocate for training to enable students and staff to have the knowledge and skills needed to recognize the signs and to whom they should report suspected child abuse and neglect.
- c. Take reasonable precautions to protect the privacy of students for whom abuse or neglect is suspected from those who do not have a legitimate need to know.
- d. Know current state laws and the school system's procedures for reporting child abuse and neglect and methods to advocate for students' physical and emotional safety following abuse/neglect reports.
- e. Connect students who have experienced abuse and neglect

- e. Promote the benefits and clarify the limitations of various appropriate technological applications.
  - f. Use established and approved means of communication with students, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and help educate students about appropriate communication and boundaries.
  - g. Understand challenges with confidentiality when using email and establish protocols and boundaries for responding to emails.
  - h. Advocate for the use of virtual learning tools that include safeguards and protocols protecting highly sensitive student information.
  - i. Advocate against alert tools or apps requiring constant monitoring by school personnel. These tools are not aligned with the nature and function of school counseling.
- b. Respect the rights and responsibilities of custodial and noncustodial parents/guardians and, as appropriate, establish a collaborative relationship to facilitate and advocate for students' maximum growth in the areas of academic, career and social/emotional development.
  - c. Promote equity and inclusion through culturally affirming and sustaining practices honoring the diversity of families. Recognize that all parents/guardians, custodial and noncustodial, are vested with certain rights and responsibilities for their children's welfare by virtue of their role and according to law.
  - d. Inform parents of the school counseling program's mission and standards in academic, career and social/emotional domains that promote and enhance the learning process and outcomes for all students.
  - e. Adhere to the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment when using universal screeners, surveys or needs assessments by informing parents/guardians prior to their use in accordance with school district policies and local, state and federal law.
  - f. Engage a diverse sample of parents/guardians and caregivers to provide opportunities for meaningful contributions to the school counseling program.
  - g. Adhere to federal, state and local laws; district policy; and ethical practice when assisting parents/guardians experiencing family difficulties interfering with their student's welfare.
  - h. Inform parents/guardians of the confidential nature of the school counseling relationship between the school counselor and student, while recognizing parents/guardians have inherent legal rights to student information.
  - i. Respect the privacy of parents/guardians in accordance with the student's best interests.
  - j. Provide parents/guardians with accurate, comprehensive and relevant information in a caring manner as appropriate and consistent with legal and ethical responsibilities to the students and parents/guardians. Exercise due diligence in a timely, efficient manner to communicate concerns that affect the students' safety and welfare.
  - k. Follow the directions and stipulations of the legal documentation in divorce, separation or custody cases, maintaining focus on the student. Adhere to clear boundaries

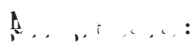
## **A.16. Virtual/Distance School Counseling**



- a. Adhere to the same legal and ethical standards in a virtual/distance/hybrid setting as in face-to-face settings.
- b. Recognize, acknowledge and problem-solve the unique challenges and limitations of virtual/distance/hybrid school counseling.
- c. Establish procedures, in collaboration with school administrators and other support staff, for students to follow in both emergency and nonemergency situations when the school counselor is not available.
- d. Recognize and address the limitation of virtual/distance/hybrid school counseling confidentiality, which may include unintended viewers or recipients.
- e. Inform both students and parents/guardians of the benefits and limitations of virtual/distance/hybrid school counseling.
- f. Educate students on how to participate in the electronic school counseling relationship to minimize and prevent potential misunderstandings that could occur due to lack of verbal cues and inability to read body language or other visual cues that provide contextual meaning to the school counseling process and relationship.
- g. Recognize the challenges in virtual/distance/hybrid settings of assisting students considering suicide, including but not limited to identifying their physical location, keeping them engaged on the call or device, contacting their parents/guardians and getting help to their location.

## **B. RESPONSIBILITIES TO PARENTS/ GUARDIANS, SCHOOL AND SELF**

### **B.1. Responsibilities to Parents/Guardians**



- a. Recognize, honor and respect the importance of parents/guardians when providing services to students in a school setting and collaborate with students' parents/guardians as appropriate.

- d. Exercise leadership to create systemic change to create a safe and supportive environment and equitable outcomes for all students.
- e. Collaborate with appropriate officials to remove barriers that may impede the effectiveness of the school and/or the school counseling program in promoting equitable student outcomes.
- f. Provide support, consultation and mentoring to professionals in need of assistance when appropriate to enhance school climate and student outcomes.
- g. Inform appropriate officials, in accordance with federal and state law and school and district policy, of conditions that may be potentially disruptive or damaging to the school's mission, personnel and property, while honoring the confidentiality between students and school counselors to the extent possible.
- h. Advocate for administrators to place licensed/certified school counselors who are competent, qualified and hold a master's degree or higher in school counseling from an accredited institution.
- i. Advocate for equitable school counseling program policies and practices for all students and stakeholders.
- j. Advocate for the use of vetted, bilingual/multilingual translators to represent languages used by families in the school community and support broader cultural communication and engagement.
- k. Affirm the abilities of all students and advocate for their learning needs, supporting the provision of appropriate accommodations and accessibility.
- l. Provide culturally responsive information to families to increase understanding, improve communication, promote engagement and improve student outcomes.
- m. Promote culturally sustaining practices to help create a safe and inclusive school environment with equitable outcomes for all students.
- n. Adhere to educational/psychological research practices, confidentiality safeguards, security practices and school district policies when conducting research.
- o. Use school and community resources to promote equity and access for all students.
- p. Use inclusive language in all forms of communication and ensure students and stakeholders have access to materials in their preferred languages when possible.
- q. Collaborate as needed to provide optimum services with other school and community professionals with legitimate educational interests (e.g., school nurse, school psychologist,



**C. SCHOOL COUNSELOR DIRECTORS/**



C, ~~...~~  
the quality of being competent; adequacy; possession of required skill, knowledge, qualification or capacity.

C, ~~...~~  
the ethical duty of school counselors to responsibly protect a student's private communications shared in counseling.

C, ~~...~~  
a situation in which a school counselor stands to personally profit from a decision involving a student.

C, ~~...~~  
permission, approval or agreement; compliance.

C, ~~...~~  
a professional relationship in which individuals meet to seek advice, information and/or deliberation to address a student's need.

C, ~~...~~  
general agreement or accepted standards regarding limits, boundaries or guidelines.

G, ~~...~~  
a set of skills enabling you to know, understand and value the similarities and differences in people; modify your behavior to be most effective and respectful of students and families; and deliver programs that fit diverse learners' needs.

A M E R I C A

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