

Preventing, Identifying, and Intervening in High Risk Situations and Behavior

High risk situations or behaviors often place student safety, healthy development, and academic success in jeopardy. These include contemplating suicide or self-harm, victims or perpetrators of bullying, harassment, intimidation, threatening or abusive relationships or events, trauma or physical violence, involvement in activities potentially harmful to self or others such as substance use, weapons, gangs, truancy, and attendance issues, academic under performance, or family and relationship issues. *The Kansas School Counselor Association (KSCA) believes that through the Kansas Comprehensive School Counseling Program (KSDE, 2009), professional school counselors are able to deliver a continuum of assistance and support services in addressing the needs of students experiencing these high risk concerns. In most schools the school counselor is the key player in preventing and intervening in these issues.*

In Kansas, professional school counselors:

- advocate for school policies, processes, and procedures that support a safe school environment; design, implement, facilitate, monitor, and evaluate school wide, at-risk prevention and intervention strategies; consult in defining risk behaviors and in designing and facilitating early identification assessment processes and procedures.
- Provide a preventive focus on healthy development for all students by collaborating and coordinating with teachers, administrators, and the community as may be appropriate to facilitate the delivery of counseling curriculum lessons (KSBOE, 2006). These lessons focus on strengthening personal and interpersonal skills in communication, decision-making, problem-solving and conflict-resolution, acceptance of differences, building respectful positive relationships, student awareness of personal safety issues, at-risk behaviors; resources to address issues of bullying, harassment and intimidation, stress, suicidal thoughts, etc. The development of these knowledge, attitude, and skill competencies generally lead to more healthy decisions, positive actions, resiliency in meeting life challenges, maximizing potential for reaching personal goals, and success in school.
- collaborate with staff, school-wide teams, parents, and community agencies to identify students in need of assistance; deliver a continuum of services including counseling, follow-up, crisis intervention, and referral as may be needed to intervene before students move through a continuum of high risk situations, problematic behaviors, or self-destructive actions.
- deliver responsive intervention and support services, including crisis intervention, short-term small group, or individual counseling for students to better understand the situations they experience, make decisions, create action plans, and apply knowledge and skills to meet challenges; provide conflict-resolution services and situational opportunities to assist students in resolving personal conflicts directly with their peers, teachers, parents/family members; provide proactive approaches to existing problems and high-risk or crisis situations. includes prevention services, training, intervention services, crisis response and follow-up, community involvement, peer mediation; work closely with students to help them make appropriate decisions, assist and support students in accepting responsibility for their own actions, stay in school or find alternative means of completing their education.
- Provide referral services to specialized support services and appropriate community agencies for the student and parents, additional specialized support services within the district, or to the appropriate community resources, agencies, or other professionals if the counselor determines that the student's problems are beyond the counselor's own professional expertise or scope of practice.
- Deliver staff development presentations to school and district staff and provide consultation and support to parents/guardians of students demonstrating at-risk behaviors.