

Key Roles Supporting the Comprehensive School Counseling Program

Professional school counselors play an essential role in the academic, career and personal/social development of all students. Teachers are the front line of guiding students on a day-to-day basis and are often the first ones to identify student issues and needs that are not being met. Administrative understanding and support is essential to program success. In addition, classified support staff and trained students provide key support and delivery roles within a comprehensive school counseling program.

Support Staff and Registrars. *The Kansas School Counselor Association (KSCA) endorses and promotes the use of administrative support staff as a means to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the program and the counselor.* Support staff can provide invaluable assistance that permits time for the professional school counselor to coordinate and deliver the services and program that require their unique training and skill-set. Professional school counselors should be involved in the selection, training, and ongoing supervision of any counseling related support staff. Some duties may require additional training. Support staff should maintain the highest level of confidentiality of student information. Care must be taken to ensure they do not involve themselves in situations that are more appropriately handled by the professional school counselor. Some examples of appropriate functions for administrative support staff include: a) collect and maintain current student files, keep other records, collect and enter data, b) word-process materials and correspondence associated with the program, c) reproduce materials needed for the professional school counselor in group or individual conferences, d) coordinate resources and counseling materials, e) welcome visitors and schedule the professional school counselor's meetings and programs, f) assist in the dissemination of routine basic information to stakeholders, g) assist students in the completion of various forms and applications.

Peer Helpers. *The Kansas School Counselor Association (KSCA) endorses and promotes the inclusion of peer helping within the comprehensive school counseling program.* Peer helping is an invaluable part of a comprehensive program and involves a variety of interpersonal helping behaviors assumed by students that expands the services of the school counseling program and serves an outreach function. Well-trained peer helpers can have a positive, supportive effect upon students that no one else can provide. Students should be selected and trained by professional school counselors in the areas of communication, helping, and leadership skills through a carefully planned program. Through proper selection, training, and supervision, peer helping can be a positive influence within the school and community, facilitating such activities as one-to-one helping relationships, group leadership, discussion leadership, tutoring, and other activities of an interpersonal helping nature. Under the supervision of professional school counselors, properly trained peer helpers provide a variety of useful and helpful services for schools. Examples include Hospitality: Welcoming and guiding new students and their parents around the school; Group settings: Serving as group leaders, group counseling assistants, teachers of helping skills to other students, communication skills trainers or peer helper trainers; One-to-one assistance: Talking with students about personal or school problems, identifying community resources, or providing information about the school's counseling program; Educational functions: Tutoring in academic areas, serving as readers for nonreaders, or assisting special education consultants in working with learning and behaviorally disabled students. Outreach: Helping increase the services of the school counseling programs, serving as listeners or as a resource for reducing crisis situations by alerting professional school counselors to problems of a serious nature. Students can often relate to and accept ideas for alternative patterns of behavior from peers who are struggling with similar feelings and problems.