

(Adopted 1984; revised 1992, 1998, 2004 and 2010, 2016)

## 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. School counselors have unique qualifications and skills to address preK–12 students' academic, career and social/emotional development needs. These standards are the ethical responsibility of all school counseling professionals.

School counselors are advocates, leaders, collaborators and consultants who create systemic change by providing equitable educational access and success by connecting their school counseling programs to the district's mission and improvement plans. School counselors demonstrate their belief that all students have the ability to learn by advocating for an education system that provides optimal learning environments for all students.

All students have the right to:

- Be respected, be treated with dignity and have access to a comprehensive school counseling program that advocates for and affirms all students from diverse populations including but not limited to: ethnic/racial identity, nationality, age, social class, economic status, abilities/disabilities, language, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity/expression, family type, religious/spiritual identity, emancipated minors, wards of the state, homeless youth and incarcerated youth. School counselors as social-justice advocates support students from all backgrounds and circumstances and consult when their competence level requires additional support.
- Receive the information and support needed to move toward self-determination, self-development and affirmation within one's group identities. Special care is given to improve overall educational outcomes for students who have been historically underserved in educational services.
- Receive critical, timely information on college, career and postsecondary options and understand the full magnitude and meaning of how college and career readiness can have an impact on their educational choices and future opportunities.
- Privacy that should be honored to the greatest extent possible, while balancing other competing interests (e.g., best interests of students, safety of others, parental rights) and adhering to laws, policies and ethical standards pertaining to confidentiality and disclosure in the school setting.
- A safe school environment promoting autonomy and justice and free from abuse, bullying, harassment and other forms of violence.

## PURPOSE

In this document, ASCA specifies the obligation to the principles of ethical behavior necessary to maintain the high standards of integrity, leadership and professionalism. The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors were developed in consultation with state school counseling associations, school counselor educators, school counseling state and district leaders and school counselors across the nation to clarify the norms, values and beliefs of the profession.

The purpose of this document is to:

- Serve as a guide for the ethical practices of all school counselors, supervisors/directors of school counseling programs and school counselor educators regardless of level, area, population served or membership in this professional association.
- Provide support and direction for self-assessment, peer consultation and evaluations regarding school counselors' responsibilities to students, parents/guardians, colleagues and professional associates, schools district employees, communities and the school counseling profession.
- Inform all stakeholders, including students, parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, community members and courts of justice of best ethical practices, values and expected behaviors of the school counseling professional.

## A. RESPONSIBILITY TO STUDENTS

### A.1. Supporting Student Development

School counselors:

- a. Have a primary obligation to the students, who are to be treated with dignity and respect as unique individuals.
- b. Aim to 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.
- d. Acknowledge the vital role of parents/guardians and families.
- e. Are concerned with students' academic, career and social/emotional needs and encourage each student's maximum development.
- f. Respect students' and families' values, beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identification/expression and cultural background and exercise great care to avoid imposing personal beliefs or values rooted in one's religion, culture or ethnicity.

- g. Are knowledgeable of laws, regulations and policies affecting students and families and strive to protect and inform students and families regarding their rights.
- 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.
- j. Maintain appropriate boundaries and are aware that any sexual or romantic relationship with students whether legal or illegal in the state of practice is considered a grievous breach of ethics and is prohibited regardless of a student's age. This prohibition applies to both in-person and electronic interactions and relationships.

## A.2. Confidentiality

### School counselors:

- a. Promote awareness of school counselors' ethical standards and legal mandates regarding confidentiality and the appropriate rationale and procedures for disclosure of student data and information to school staff.
- b. Inform students of the purposes, goals, techniques and rules of procedure under which they may receive counseling. Disclosure includes informed consent and clarification of the limits of confidentiality. Informed consent requires competence, voluntariness and knowledge on the part of students to understand the limits of confidentiality and, therefore, can be difficult to obtain from students of certain developmental levels, English-language learners and special-needs populations. If the student is able to give assent/consent before school counselors share confidential information, school counselors attempt to gain the student's assent/consent.
- c. Are aware that even though attempts are made to obtain informed consent, it is not always possible. When needed, school counselors make counseling decisions on students' behalf that promote students' welfare.
- d. Explain the limits of confidentiality in developmentally appropriate terms through multiple methods such as student handbooks, school counselor department websites, school counseling brochures, classroom curriculum and/or verbal notification to individual students.
- e. Keep information confidential unless legal requirements demand that confidential information be revealed or a breach is required to prevent serious and foreseeable harm to the student. Serious and foreseeable harm is different for each minor in schools and is determined by students' developmental and chronological age, the setting, parental rights and the nature of the harm. School counselors consult with appropriate professionals when in doubt as to the validity of an exception.
- f. Recognize their primary ethical obligation for confidentiality is to the students but balance that obligation with an understanding of parents'/guardians' legal and inherent rights to be the guiding voice in their children's lives. School counselors understand the need to balance students' ethical rights to make choices, their capacity to give consent or assent, and parental or familial legal rights and responsibilities to make decisions on their child's behalf.

g. Promote the autonomy of students to the extent possible and use the most appropriate and least intrusive method to breach confidentiality, if such action is warranted. The child's developmental age and the circumstances requiring the breach are considered, and as appropriate, students are engaged in a discussion about the method and timing of the breach. Consultation with peers and/or supervision is recommended.

h. In absence of state legislation expressly forbidding disclosure, consider the ethical responsibility to provide information to an identified third party who, by his/her relationship with the student, is at a high risk of contracting a disease that is commonly known to be communicable and fatal. Disclosure requires satisfaction of all of the following conditions:

- 1) Student identifies partner, or the partner is highly identifiable
- 2) School counselor recommends the student notify partner and refrain from further high-risk behavior
- 3) Student refuses
- 4) School counselor informs the student of the intent to notify the partner
- 5) School counselor seeks legal consultation from the school district's legal representative in writing as to the legalities of informing the partner

i. Request of the court that disclosure not be required when the school counselor's testimony or case notes are subpoenaed if the release of confidential information may potentially harm a student or the counseling relationship.

j. Protect the confidentiality of students' records and release personal data in accordance with prescribed federal and state laws and school board policies.

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. Adhere to state, federal and school board policy when conveying sensitive information.

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.

o. Avoid using software programs without the technological capabilities to protect student information based upon currently acceptable security standards and the law.

### **A.3. Comprehensive Data-Informed Program**

School counselors:

- 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 as expressed in A.2.
- g. Share data outcomes with stakeholders.

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

School counselors:

- a. Collaborate with administration, teachers, staff and decision makers to create a culture of postsecondary readiness
- b. Provide and advocate for individual students' preK–postsecondary college and career awareness, exploration and postsecondary planning and decision making, which supports the students' right to choose from the wide array of options when students complete secondary education.
- c. Identify gaps in college and career access and the implications of such data for addressing both intentional and unintentional biases related to college and career counseling.
- d. Provide opportunities for all students to develop the mindsets and behaviors necessary to learn work-related skills, resilience, perseverance, an understanding of lifelong learning as a part of long-term career success, a positive attitude toward learning and a strong work ethic.

### **A.5. Dual Relationships and Managing Boundaries**

School counselors:

- a. Avoid dual relationships that might impair their objectivity and increase the risk of harm to students (e.g., counseling one's family members or the children of close friends or associates). If a dual relationship is unavoidable, the school counselor is responsible for taking action to eliminate or reduce the potential for harm to the student through use of safeguards, which might include informed consent, consultation, supervision and documentation.

b. Establish and maintain appropriate professional relationships with students at all times. School counselors consider the risks and benefits of extending current school counseling relationships beyond conventional parameters, such as attending a student's distant athletic competition. In extending these boundaries, school counselors take appropriate professional precautions such as informed consent, consultation and supervision. School counselors document the nature of interactions that extend beyond conventional parameters, including the rationale for the interaction, the potential benefit and the possible positive and negative consequences for the student and school counselor.

c. Avoid dual relationships beyond the professional level with school personnel, parents/guardians and students' other family members when these relationships might infringe on the integrity of the school counselor/student relationship. Inappropriate dual relationships include, but are not limited to, providing direct discipline, teaching courses that involve grading students and/or accepting administrative duties in the absence of an administrator.

d. Do not use personal social media, personal e-mail accounts or personal texts to interact with students unless specifically encouraged and sanctioned by the school district. School counselors adhere to professional boundaries and legal, ethical and school district guidelines when using technology with students, parents/guardians or school staff. The technology utilized, including, but not limited to, social networking sites or apps, should be endorsed by the school district and used for professional communication and the distribution of vital information.

### **A.6. Appropriate Referrals and Advocacy**

School counselors:

a. Collaborate with all relevant stakeholders, including students, educators and parents/guardians when student assistance is needed, including the identification of early warning signs of student distress.

b. Provide a list of resources for outside agencies and resources in their community to student(s) and parents/guardians when students need or request additional support. School counselors provide multiple referral options or the district's vetted list and are careful not to indicate an endorsement or preference for one counselor or practice. School counselors encourage parents to interview outside professionals to make a 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 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.

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 diversity. School counselors should pursue additional training and supervision in areas where they are at risk of imposing their values on students, especially when the school counselor's values are discriminatory in nature. 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, objective, meaningful data necessary to adequately evaluate, counsel and assist the student.

h. Ensure there is not a conflict of interest in providing referral resources. School counselors do not refer or accept a referral to counsel a student from their school if they also work in a private counseling practice.

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

**School counselors:**

- a. Facilitate short-term groups to address students' academic, career and/or social/emotional issues.
- b. Inform parent/guardian(s) of student participation in a small group.
- c. Screen students for group membership.
- d. Use data to measure member needs to establish well-defined expectations of group members.
- e. Communicate the aspiration of confidentiality as a group norm, while recognizing and working from the protective posture that confidentiality for minors in schools cannot be guaranteed.
- f. Select topics for groups with the clear understanding that some topics are not suitable for groups in schools and accordingly take precautions to protect members from harm as a result of interactions with the group.
- g. Facilitate groups from the framework of evidence-based or research-based practices.
- h. Practice within their competence level and develop professional competence through training and supervision.
- i. Measure the outcomes of group participation (process, perception and outcome data).
- j. Provide necessary follow up with group members.

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

**School counselors:**

- a. Safeguard the welfare of students participating in peer-to-peer programs under their direction.
- b. Supervise students engaged in peer helping, mediation and other similar peer-support groups. School counselors are responsible for appropriate skill development for students serving as peer support in school counseling programs. School counselors

continuously monitor students who are giving peer support and reinforce the confidential nature of their work. School counselors inform peer-support students about the parameters of when students need to report information to responsible adults.

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

**School counselors:**

a. Inform parents/guardians and/or appropriate authorities when a student poses a serious and foreseeable risk of harm to self or others. When feasible, this is to be done after careful deliberation and consultation with other appropriate professionals. School counselors inform students of the school counselor's legal and ethical obligations to report the concern to the appropriate authorities unless it is appropriate to withhold this information to protect the student (e.g. student might run away if he/she knows parents are being called). The consequence of the risk of not giving parents/guardians a chance to intervene on behalf of their child is too great. Even if the danger appears relatively remote, parents should be notified.

b. Use risk assessments with caution. If risk assessments are used by the school counselor, an intervention plan should be developed and in place prior to this practice. When reporting risk-assessment results to parents, school counselors do not negate the risk of harm even if the assessment reveals a low risk as students may minimize risk to avoid further scrutiny and/or parental notification. School counselors report risk assessment results to parents to underscore the need to act on behalf of a child at risk; this is not intended to assure parents their child isn't at risk, which is something a school counselor cannot know with certainty.

c. Do not release a student who is a danger to self or others until the student has proper and necessary support. If parents 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. Report to parents/guardians and/or appropriate authorities when students disclose a perpetrated or a perceived threat to their physical or mental well-being. This threat may include, but is not limited to, physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, dating violence, bullying or sexual harassment. The school counselor follows applicable federal, state and local laws and school district policy.

### **A.10. Underserved and At-Risk Populations**

**School counselors:**

- 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.

### **A.11. Bullying, Harassment and Child Abuse**

#### **School counselors:**

- a. Report to the administration all incidents of bullying, dating violence and sexual harassment as most fall under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 or other federal and state laws as being illegal and require administrator interventions. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. 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.
- d. 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.
- e. Guide and assist students who have experienced abuse and neglect by providing appropriate services.

### **A.12. Student Records**

#### **School counselors:**

- a. Abide by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which defines who has access to students' educational records and allows parents the right to review and challenge perceived inaccuracies in their child's records.
- b. Advocate for the ethical use of student data and records and inform administration of inappropriate or harmful practices.
- c. Recognize the difficulty in meeting the criteria of sole-possession records.

- d. Recognize that sole-possession records and case notes can be subpoenaed unless there is a specific state statute for privileged communication expressly protecting student/school counselor communication.
- e. Recognize that electronic communications with school officials regarding individual students, even without using student names, are likely to create student records that must be addressed in accordance with FERPA and state laws.
- f. Establish a reasonable timeline for purging sole-possession records or case notes. Suggested guidelines include shredding paper sole-possession records or deleting electronic sole-possession records when a student transitions to the next level, transfers to another school or graduates. School counselors do not destroy sole-possession records that may be needed by a court of law, such as notes on child abuse, suicide, sexual harassment or violence, without prior review and approval by school district legal counsel. School counselors follow district policies and procedures when contacting legal counsel.

### **A.13. Evaluation, Assessment and Interpretation**

#### **School counselors:**

- a. Use only valid and reliable tests and assessments with concern for bias and cultural sensitivity.
- b. Adhere to all professional standards when selecting, administering and interpreting assessment measures and only utilize assessment measures that are within the scope of practice for school counselors and for which they are licensed, certified and competent.
- c. Are mindful of confidentiality guidelines when utilizing paper or electronic evaluative or assessment instruments and programs.
- d. Consider the student's developmental age, language skills and level of competence when determining the appropriateness of an assessment.
- e. Use multiple data points when possible to provide students and families with accurate, objective and concise information to promote students' well-being.
- f. Provide interpretation of the nature, purposes, results and potential impact of assessment/evaluation measures in language the students and parents/guardians can understand.
- g. Monitor the use of assessment results and interpretations and take reasonable steps to prevent others from misusing the information.
- h. Use caution when utilizing assessment techniques, making evaluations and interpreting the performance of populations not represented in the norm group on which an instrument is standardized.
- i. Conduct school counseling program evaluations to determine the effectiveness of activities supporting students' academic, career and social/emotional development through accountability measures, especially examining efforts to close information, opportunity and attainment gaps.

## **A.14. Technical and Digital Citizenship**

### **School counselors:**

- a. Demonstrate appropriate selection and use of technology and software applications to enhance students' academic, career and social/emotional development. Attention is given to the ethical and legal considerations of technological applications, including confidentiality concerns, security issues, potential limitations and benefits and communication practices in electronic media.
- b. Take appropriate and reasonable measures for maintaining confidentiality of student information and educational records stored or transmitted through the use of computers, social media, facsimile machines, telephones, voicemail, answering machines and other electronic technology.
- c. Promote the safe and responsible use of technology in collaboration with educators and families.
- d. Promote the benefits and clarify the limitations of various appropriate technological applications.
- e. Use established and approved means of communication with students, maintaining appropriate boundaries. School counselors help educate students about appropriate communication and boundaries.
- f. Advocate for equal access to technology for all students.

## **A.15. Virtual/Distance School Counseling**

### **School counselors:**

- a. Adhere to the same ethical guidelines in a virtual/distance setting as school counselors in face-to-face settings.
- b. Recognize and acknowledge the challenges and limitations of virtual/distance school counseling.
- c. Implement procedures for students to follow in both emergency and nonemergency situations when the school counselor is not available.
- d. Recognize and mitigate the limitation of virtual/distance school counseling confidentiality, which may include unintended viewers or recipients.
- e. Inform both the student and parent/guardian of the benefits and limitations of virtual/distance 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 school counseling relationship.

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

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

#### **School counselors:**

- a. Recognize that providing services to minors in a school setting requires school counselors to collaborate with students' parents/guardians as appropriate.

b. Respect the rights and responsibilities of custodial and noncustodial parents/guardians and, as appropriate, establish a collaborative relationship with parents/guardians to facilitate students' maximum development.

c. Adhere to laws, local guidelines and ethical practice when assisting parents/guardians experiencing family difficulties interfering with the student's welfare.

d. Are culturally competent and sensitive to diversity among 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.

e. Inform parents of the mission of the school counseling program and program standards in academic, career and social/emotional domains that promote and enhance the learning process for all students.

f. Inform parents/guardians of the confidential nature of the school counseling relationship between the school counselor and student.

g. Respect the confidentiality of parents/guardians as appropriate and in accordance with the student's best interests.

h. Provide parents/guardians with accurate, comprehensive and relevant information in an objective and caring manner, as is appropriate and consistent with ethical and legal responsibilities to the student and parent.

i. In cases of divorce or separation, follow the directions and stipulations of the legal documentation, maintaining focus on the student. School counselors avoid supporting one parent over another.

### **B.2. Responsibilities to the School**

#### **School counselors:**

a. Develop and maintain professional relationships and systems of communication with faculty, staff and administrators to support students.

b. Design and deliver comprehensive school counseling programs that are integral to the school's academic mission; driven by student data; based on standards for academic, career and social/emotional development; and promote and enhance the learning process for all students.

c. Advocate for a school counseling program free of non-school-counseling assignments identified by "The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs" as inappropriate to the school counselor's role.

d. Provide leadership to create systemic change to enhance the school.

e. Collaborate with appropriate officials to remove barriers that may impede the effectiveness of the school or the school counseling program.

f. Provide support, consultation and mentoring to professionals in need of assistance when in the scope of the school counselor's role.

g. Inform appropriate officials, in accordance with school board policy, of conditions that may be potentially disruptive or

damaging to the school's mission, personnel and property while honoring the confidentiality between the student and the school counselor to the extent feasible, consistent with applicable law and policy.

h. Advocate for administrators to place in school counseling positions certified school counselors who are competent, qualified and hold a master's degree or higher in school counseling from an accredited program.

i. Advocate for equitable school counseling program policies and practices for all students and stakeholders.

j. Strive to use translators who have been vetted or reviewed and bilingual/multilingual school counseling program materials representing languages used by families in the school community.

k. Affirm the abilities of and advocate for the learning needs of all students. School counselors support the provision of appropriate accommodations and accessibility.

l. Provide workshops and written/digital information to families to increase understanding, improve communication and promote student achievement.

m. Promote cultural competence to help create a safer more inclusive school environment.

n. Adhere to educational/psychological research practices, confidentiality safeguards, security practices and school district policies when conducting research.

o. Promote equity and access for all students through the use of community resources.

p. Use culturally inclusive language in all forms of communication.

q. Collaborate as needed to provide optimum services with other professionals such as special educators, school nurses, school social workers, school psychologists, college counselors/admissions officers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, administrators.

r. Work responsibly to remedy work environments that do not reflect the profession's ethics.

s. Work responsibly through the correct channels to try and remedy work conditions that do not reflect the ethics of the profession.

### **B.3. Responsibilities to Self**

#### **School counselors:**

a. Have completed a counselor education program at an accredited institution and earned a master's degree in school counseling.

b. Maintain membership in school counselor professional organizations to stay up to date on current research and to maintain professional competence in current school counseling issues and topics. School counselors maintain competence in their skills by utilizing current interventions and best practices.

c. Accept employment only for those positions for which they are qualified by education, training, supervised experience and state/national professional credentials.

d. Adhere to ethical standards of the profession and other official policy statements such as ASCA Position Statements and

Role Statements, school board policies and relevant laws. When laws and ethical codes are in conflict school counselors work to adhere to both as much as possible.

e. Engage in professional development and personal growth throughout their careers. Professional development includes attendance at state and national conferences and reading journal articles. School counselors regularly attend training on school counselors' current legal and ethical responsibilities.

f. Monitor their emotional and physical health and practice wellness to ensure optimal professional effectiveness. School counselors seek physical or mental health support when needed to ensure professional competence.

g. Monitor personal behaviors and recognize the high standard of care a professional in this critical position of trust must maintain on and off the job. School counselors are cognizant of and refrain from activity that may diminish their effectiveness within the school community.

h. Seek consultation and supervision from school counselors and other professionals who are knowledgeable of school counselors' ethical practices when ethical and professional questions arise.

i. Monitor and expand personal multicultural and social-justice advocacy awareness, knowledge and skills to be an effective culturally competent school counselor. Understand how prejudice, privilege and various forms of oppression based on ethnicity, racial identity, age, economic status, abilities/disabilities, language, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity expression, family type, religious/spiritual identity, appearance and living situations (e.g., foster care, homelessness, incarceration) affect students and stakeholders.

j. Refrain from refusing services to students based solely on the school counselor's personally held beliefs or values rooted in one's religion, culture or ethnicity. School counselors respect the diversity of students and seek training and supervision when prejudice or biases interfere with providing comprehensive services to all students.

k. Work toward a school climate that embraces diversity and promotes academic, career and social/emotional development for all students.

l. Make clear distinctions between actions and statements (both verbal and written) made as a private individual and those made as a representative of the school counseling profession and of the school district.

m. Respect the intellectual property of others and adhere to copyright laws and correctly cite others' work when using it.

### **C. SCHOOL COUNSELOR ADMINISTRATORS/SUPERVISORS**

**School counselor administrators/supervisors support school counselors in their charge by:**

a. Advocating both within and outside of their schools or districts for adequate resources to implement a comprehensive school counseling program and meet their students' needs.

b. Advocating for fair and open distribution of resources among programs supervised. An allocation procedure should be developed that is nondiscriminatory, informed by data and consistently applied.

- c. Taking reasonable steps to ensure school and other resources are available to provide appropriate staff supervision and training.
- d. Providing opportunities for professional development in current research related to school counseling practice and ethics.
- e. Taking steps to eliminate conditions or practices in their schools or organizations that may violate, discourage or interfere with compliance with the ethics and laws related to the profession.
- f. Monitoring school and organizational policies, regulations and procedures to ensure practices are consistent with the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors.

#### **D. SCHOOL COUNSELING INTERN SITE SUPERVISORS**

##### **Field/intern site supervisors:**

- a. Are licensed or certified school counselors and/or have an understanding of comprehensive school counseling programs and the ethical practices of school counselors.
- b. Have the education and training to provide clinical supervision. Supervisors regularly pursue continuing education activities on both counseling and supervision topics and skills.
- c. Use a collaborative model of supervision that is on-going and includes, but is not limited to, the following activities: promoting professional growth, supporting best practices and ethical practice, assessing supervisee performance and developing plans for improvement, consulting on specific cases and assisting in the development of a course of action.
- d. Are culturally competent and consider cultural factors that may have an impact on the supervisory relationship.
- e. Do not engage in supervisory relationships with individuals with whom they have the inability to remain objective. Such individuals include, but are not limited to, family members and close friends.
- f. Are competent with technology used to perform supervisory responsibilities and online supervision, if applicable. Supervisors protect all electronically transmitted confidential information.
- g. Understand there are differences in face-to face and virtual communication (e.g., absence of verbal and nonverbal cues) that may have an impact on virtual supervision. Supervisors educate supervisees on how to communicate electronically to prevent and avoid potential problems.
- h. Provide information about how and when virtual supervisory services will be utilized. Reasonable access to pertinent applications should be provided to school counselors.
- i. Ensure supervisees are aware of policies and procedures related to supervision and evaluation and provide due-process procedures if supervisees request or appeal their evaluations.
- j. Ensure performance evaluations are completed in a timely, fair and considerate manner, using data when available and based on clearly stated criteria.
- k. Use evaluation tools measuring the competence of school counseling interns. These tools should be grounded in state and national school counseling standards. In the event no such tool is available in the school district, the supervisor seeks out relevant evaluation tools and advocates for their use.

- l. Are aware of supervisee limitations and communicate concerns to the university/college supervisor in a timely manner.
- m. Assist supervisees in obtaining remediation and professional development as necessary.
- n. Contact university/college supervisors to recommend dismissal when supervisees are unable to demonstrate competence as a school counselor as defined by the ASCA School Counselor Competencies and state and national standards. Supervisors consult with school administrators and document recommendations to dismiss or refer a supervisee for assistance. Supervisors ensure supervisees are aware of such decisions and the resources available to them. Supervisors document all steps taken.

#### **E. MAINTENANCE OF STANDARDS**

When serious doubt exists as to the ethical behavior of a colleague(s) the following procedures may serve as a guide:

- a. School counselors consult with professional colleagues to discuss the potentially unethical behavior and to see if the professional colleague views the situation as an ethical violation. School counselors understand mandatory reporting in their respective district and states.
- b. School counselors discuss and seek resolution directly with the colleague whose behavior is in question unless the behavior is unlawful, abusive, egregious or dangerous, in which case proper school or community authorities are contacted.
- c. If the matter remains unresolved at the school, school district or state professional practice/standards commission, referral for review and appropriate action should be made in the following sequence:
  - State school counselor association
  - American School Counselor Association (Complaints should be submitted in hard copy to the ASCA Ethics Committee, c/o the Executive Director, American School Counselor Association, 1101 King St., Suite 310, Alexandria, VA 22314.)

#### **F. ETHICAL DECISION MAKING**

When faced with an ethical dilemma, school counselors and school counseling program directors/supervisors use an ethical decision-making model such as Solutions to Ethical Problems in Schools (STEPS) (Stone, 2001):

- a. Define the problem emotionally and intellectually
- b. Apply the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors and the law
- c. Consider the students' chronological and developmental levels
- d. Consider the setting, parental rights and minors' rights
- e. Apply the ethical principles of beneficence, autonomy, nonmaleficence, loyalty and justice
- f. Determine potential courses of action and their consequences
- g. Evaluate the selected action
- h. Consult
- i. Implement the course of action



## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

### **Advocate**

a person who speaks, writes or acts to promote the well-being of students, parents/guardians and the school counseling profession. School counselors advocate to close the information, opportunity, intervention and attainment gaps for all students.

### **Assent**

to demonstrate agreement when a student is not competent to give informed consent to counseling or other services the school counselor is providing.

### **Assessment**

collecting in-depth information about a person to develop a comprehensive plan that will guide the collaborative counseling and service provision process.

### **Boundaries**

something that indicates or affixes an extent or limits.

### **Breach**

disclosure of information given in private or confidential communication such as information given during counseling.

### **Competence**

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

### **Confidentiality**

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

### **Conflict of Interest**

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

### **Consent**

permission, approval or agreement; compliance.

### **Consultation**

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

### **Conventional Parameters**

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

### **Cultural Sensitivity**

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

### **Data Dialogues**

inquiry with others around student information to uncover inequities, promote informed investigations and assist in understanding the meaning of data and the next steps to have an impact on data.

### **Data Informed**

accessing data, applying meaning to it and using data to have an impact on student success.

### **Developmental Level/Age**

the age of an individual determined by degree of emotional, mental and physiological maturity as compared with typical behaviors and characteristics of that chronological age.

### **Disclosure**

the act or an instance of exposure or revelation.

### **Diversity**

the inclusion of individuals representing more than one national origin, gender/gender identity, color, religion, socio-economic stratum, sexual orientation and the intersection of cultural and social identities.

### **Dual Relationship**

a relationship in which a school counselor is concurrently participating in two or more roles with a student.

### **Empathy**

the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts and experience of another without having the feelings, thoughts and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner.

### **Emancipated Minor**

a minor who is legally freed from control by his or her parents or guardians, and the parents or guardians are freed from any and all responsibility toward the child.

### **Encryption**

process of putting information into a coded form to control and limit access to authorized users.

### **Ethics**

the norms and principles of conduct and philosophy governing the profession.

### **Ethical Behavior**

actions defined by standards of conduct for the profession.

### **Ethical Obligation**

a standard or set of standards defining the course of action for the profession.

### **Ethical Rights**

the fundamental normative rules about what is allowed of people or owed to people, according to some legal system, social convention or ethical theory.

### **Feasible**

capable of being done, effected or accomplished.

### **Gender Expression**

the ways in which students manifest masculinity or femininity in terms of clothing, communication patterns and interests, which may or may not reflect the student's gender identity.

### **Gender Identity**

One's personal experience of one's own gender. When one's gender identity and biological sex are not congruent, the student may identify as transsexual or transgender.

### **Harassment**

the act of systematic and/or continued unwanted disturbing or troubling persecution.

### **Informed Consent**

assisting students in acquiring an understanding of the limits of confidentiality, the benefits, facts and risks of entering into a counseling relationship.

### **Intervention**

to provide modifications, materials, advice, aids, services or other forms of support to have a positive impact on the outcome or course of a condition.

**Legal Mandates**

a judicial command or precept issued by a court or magistrate, directing proper behavior to enforce a judgment, sentence or decree.

**Legal Rights**

those rights bestowed onto a person by a given legal system.

**Mandatory Reporting**

the legal requirement to report to authorities.

**Minors**

persons under the age of 18 years unless otherwise designated by statute or regulation.

**Perception**

A mental image or awareness of environment through a physical sensation. A capacity for understanding or a result of an observation.

**Peer Helper**

peer-to-peer interaction in which individuals who are of approximately the same age take on a helping role assisting students who may share related values, experiences and lifestyles.

**Peer Support**

programs that enhance the effectiveness of the school counseling program while increasing outreach and raising student awareness of services.

**Privacy**

the right of an individual to keep oneself and one's personal information free from unauthorized disclosure.

**Privileged Communication**

conversation that takes place within the context of a protected relationship, such as that between an attorney and client, a husband and wife, a priest and penitent, a doctor and patient and, in some states, a school counselor and a student.

**Professional Development**

the process of improving and increasing capabilities through access to education and training opportunities.

**Relationship**

a connection, association or involvement.

**Risk Assessment**

a systematic process of evaluating potential risks

**School Counseling Supervisor**

a qualified professional who provides guidance, teaching and support for the professional development of school counselors and school counseling candidates.

**Serious and Foreseeable**

when a reasonable person can anticipate significant and harmful possible consequences.

**Sole-Possession Records**

exempted from the definition of educational records and the protection of FERPA, are records used only as a personal memory aid that are kept in the sole possession of the maker of the record and are not accessible or revealed to any other person except a temporary substitute for the maker of the record and provide only professional opinion or personal observations.

**Stakeholder**

a person or group that shares an investment or interest in an endeavor.

**Supervision**

a collaborative relationship in which one person promotes and/ or evaluates the development of another.

**Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972**

a law that demands that no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

**Virtual/Distance Counseling**

counseling by electronic means.

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