

# Why Secondary School Counselors?



**T**oday's young people are living in an exciting time, with an increasingly diverse and mobile society, new technologies, and expanding opportunities. To help ensure that they are prepared to become the next generation of parents, workers, leaders, and citizen," every student needs support, guidance, and opportunities during adolescence, a time of rapid growth and change. Adolescents face unique and diverse challenges, both personally and developmentally, that impact academic achievement.

## SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

High school is the final transition into adulthood and the world of work as students begin separating from parents and exploring and defining their independence. Students are deciding who they are, what they do well, and what they will do when they graduate. During these adolescent years, students are evaluating their strengths, skills and abilities. The biggest influence is their peer group. They are searching for a place to belong and rely on peer acceptance and feedback. They face increased pressures regarding risk behaviors involving sex, alcohol and drugs while exploring the boundaries of more acceptable behavior and mature, meaningful relationships. They need guidance in making concrete and compounded decisions. They must deal with academic pressures as they face high-stakes testing, the challenges of college admissions, the scholarship and financial aid application process and entrance into a competitive job market.

## MEETING THE CHALLENGE

Secondary school counselors are professional educators with a mental health perspective who understand and respond to the challenges presented by today's diverse student population. Secondary school counselors do not work in isolation; rather they are integral to the total educational program. They provide proactive leadership that engages all stakeholders in the delivery of programs and services to help the student achieve success in school. Professional school counselors align and work with the school's mission to support the academic achievement of all students as they prepare for the ever-changing world of the 21st century. This mission is accomplished through the design, development, implementation and

evaluation of a comprehensive, developmental and systematic school-counseling program. The ASCA Student Standards in the academic, career, and personal/social domains are the foundation for this work. The ASCA National Model: A Framework For School Counseling Programs (2012), with its data-driven and results-based focus serves as a guide for today's school counselor who is uniquely trained to implement this program.

## **SECONDARY SCHOOL COUNSELORS IMPLEMENT THE COUNSELING PROGRAM BY PROVIDING:**

### **Classroom Guidance**

- Academic skills support
- Organizational, study and test-taking skills
- Post-secondary planning and application process
- Career planning
- Education in understanding self and others
- Coping strategies
- Peer relationships and effective social skills
- Communication, problem-solving, decision-making, conflict resolution and study skills
- Career awareness and the world of work
- Substance abuse education
- Multicultural/diversity awareness

### **Individual Student Planning**

- Goal setting
- Academic plans
- Career plans
- Problem solving
- Education in understanding of self, including strengths and weaknesses
- Transition plans

### **Responsive Services**

- Individual and small-group counseling
- Individual/family/school crisis intervention
- Peer facilitation
- Consultation/collaboration
- Referrals

### **System Support**

- Professional development
- Consultation, collaboration and teaming
- Program management and operation
- These examples are not intended to be all-inclusive

## **SECONDARY SCHOOL COUNSELORS COLLABORATE WITH:**

### **Parents**

- Academic planning/support
- Post-secondary planning
- Scholarship/financial search process
- School-to-parent communications
- School-to-work transition programs
- One-on-one parent conferencing
- Referral process

### **Students**

- Academic support services
- Program planning
- Peer education program
- Peer mediation program
- Crisis management
- Transition programs

### **Teachers**

- Portfolio development, providing recommendations and assisting students with the post-secondary application process
- Classroom guidance lessons on post-secondary planning, study skills, career development, etc.
- School-to-work transition programs
- Academic support, learning style assessment and education to help students succeed academically
- Classroom speakers
- At-risk student identification and implementation of interventions to enhance success

### **Administrators**

- School climate
- Academic support interventions
- Behavioral management plans
- School-wide needs assessments
- Data sharing
- Student assistance team development

### **Community**

- Job shadowing, worked-based learning, part-time jobs, etc.
- Crisis interventions
- Referrals
- Career education

## **Why High School Counselors?**

High school years are full of growth, promise, excitement, frustration, disappointment and hope. It is the time when students begin to discover what the future holds for them. Secondary school counselors enhance the learning process and promote academic achievement. School counseling programs are essential for students to achieve optimal personal growth, acquire positive social skills and values, set appropriate career goals and realize full academic potential to become productive, contributing members of the world community. The professional high school counselor holds a master's degree and required state certification in school counseling. Maintaining certification includes on-going professional development to stay current with educational reform and challenges facing today's students. Professional association membership is encouraged as it enhances the school counselor's knowledge and effectiveness.