



ASCA School Counselor Competencies

The ASCA School Counselor Competencies outline the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes that ensure school counselors are equipped to meet the rigorous demands of the profession and the needs of pre-K–12 students. These competencies help ensure new and experienced school counselors are equipped to establish, maintain and enhance a comprehensive school counseling program addressing academic achievement, career planning and personal/social development.

Organized around and consistent with “The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs (Third Edition),” the competencies can be used in a variety of ways including:

School counselors

- Self-assess their own competencies
- Formulate an appropriate professional development plan

School administrators

- Guide the recruitment and selection of competent school counselors
- Develop or inform meaningful school counselor performance evaluation

School counselor education programs

- Establish benchmarks for ensuring school education students graduate with the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for developing comprehensive school counseling programs.

I. SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAMS

School counselors should possess the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to plan, organize, implement and evaluate a comprehensive, developmental, results-based school counseling program that aligns with the ASCA National Model.

I-A: Knowledge

ASCA’s position statement, The Professional School Counselor and School Counseling Preparation Programs, states that school counselors should articulate and demonstrate an understanding of:

- I-A-1. The organizational structure and governance of the American educational system as well as cultural, political and social influences on current educational practices
- I-A-2. The organizational structure and components of an effective school counseling program that aligns with the ASCA National Model
- I-A-3. Barriers to student learning and use of advocacy and data-driven school counseling practices to close the achievement/opportunity gap

- I-A-4. Leadership principles and theories
- I-A-5. Individual counseling, group counseling and classroom instruction ensuring equitable access to resources promoting academic achievement, career development and personal/social development for every student
- I-A-6. Collaborations with stakeholders such as parents and guardians, teachers, administrators and community leaders to create learning environments that promote educational equity and success for every student
- I-A-7. Legal, ethical and professional issues in pre-K–12 schools
- I-A-8. Developmental theory, learning theories, social justice theory, multiculturalism, counseling theories and career counseling theories
- I-A-9. The continuum of mental health services, including prevention and intervention strategies to enhance student success

I-B: Abilities and Skills

An effective school counselor is able to accomplish measurable objectives demonstrating the following abilities and skills.

- I-B-1. Plans, organizes, implements and evaluates a school counseling program aligning with the ASCA National Model
- I-B-1a. Creates a vision statement examining the professional and personal competencies and qualities a school counselor should possess
- I-B-1b. Describes the rationale for a comprehensive school counseling program
- I-B-1c. Applies the school counseling themes of leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change, which are critical to a successful school counseling program
- I-B-1d. Describes, defines and identifies the qualities of an effective school counseling program
- I-B-1e. Describes the benefits of a comprehensive school counseling program for all stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, school boards, department of education, school counselors, counselor educators, community stakeholders and business leaders
- I-B-1f. Describes the history of school counseling to create a context for the current state of the profession and comprehensive school counseling programs
- I-B-1g. Uses technology effectively and efficiently to plan, organize, implement and evaluate the comprehensive school counseling program
- I-B-1h. Demonstrates multicultural, ethical and professional competencies in planning, organizing, implementing and evaluating the comprehensive school counseling program
- I-B-2. Serves as a leader in the school and community to promote and support student success
- I-B-2a. Understands and defines leadership and its role in comprehensive school counseling programs
- I-B-2b. Identifies and applies a model of leadership to a comprehensive school counseling program
- I-B-2c. Identifies and demonstrates professional and personal qualities and skills of effective leaders
- I-B-2d. Identifies and applies components of the ASCA National Model requiring leadership, such as an advisory council, management tools and accountability
- I-B-2e. Creates a plan to challenge the non-counseling tasks that are assigned to school counselors

- I-B-3. Advocates for student success
- I-B-3a. Understands and defines advocacy and its role in comprehensive school counseling programs
- I-B-3b. Identifies and demonstrates benefits of advocacy with school and community stakeholders
- I-B-3c. Describes school counselor advocacy competencies, which include dispositions, knowledge and skills
- I-B-3d. Reviews advocacy models and develops a personal advocacy plan
- I-B-3e. Understands the process for development of policy and procedures at the building, district, state and national levels

- I-B-4. Collaborates with parents, teachers, administrators, community leaders and other stakeholders to promote and support student success
- I-B-4a. Defines collaboration and its role in comprehensive school counseling programs
- I-B-4b. Identifies and applies models of collaboration for effective use in a school counseling program and understands the similarities and differences between consultation, collaboration and counseling and coordination strategies
- I-B-4c. Creates statements or other documents delineating the various roles of student service providers, such as school social worker, school psychologist or school nurse, and identifies best practices for collaborating to affect student success
- I-B-4d. Understands and knows how to apply a consensus-building process to foster agreement in a group
- I-B-4e. Understands how to facilitate group meetings to effectively and efficiently meet group goals

- I-B-5. Acts as a systems change agent to create an environment promoting and supporting student success
- I-B-5a. Defines and understands system change and its role in comprehensive school counseling programs
- I-B-5b. Develops a plan to deal with personal (emotional and cognitive) and institutional resistance impeding the change process
- I-B-5c. Understands the impact of school, district and state educational policies, procedures and practices supporting and/or impeding student success

I-C: Attitudes

School counselors believe:

- I-C-1. Every student can learn, and every student can succeed
- I-C-2. Every student should have access to and opportunity for a high-quality education
- I-C-3. Every student should graduate from high school and be prepared for employment or college and other post-secondary education
- I-C-4. Every student should have access to a school counseling program
- I-C-5. Effective school counseling is a collaborative process involving school counselors, students, parents, teachers, administrators, community leaders and other stakeholders
- I-C-6. School counselors can and should be leaders in the school and district
- I-C-7. The effectiveness of school counseling programs should be measurable using process, perception and outcome data

II. FOUNDATIONS

School counselors should possess the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to establish the foundations of a school counseling program aligning with the ASCA National Model.

II-A: Knowledge

School counselors should articulate and demonstrate an understanding of:

- II-A-1. Beliefs and vision of the school counseling program that align with current school improvement and student success initiatives at the school, district and state level
- II-A-2. Educational systems, philosophies and theories and current trends in education, including federal and state legislation
- II-A-3. Learning theories
- II-A-4. History and purpose of school counseling, including traditional and transformed roles of school counselors
- II-A-5. Human development theories and developmental issues affecting student success
- II-A-6. District, state and national student standards and competencies, including ASCA Student Standards and other student standards that may complement and inform the comprehensive school counseling program
- II-A-7. Legal and ethical standards and principles of the school counseling profession and educational systems, including district and building policies
- II-A-8. The three domains of academic achievement, career planning and personal/social development

II-B: Abilities and Skills

An effective school counselor is able to accomplish measurable objectives demonstrating the following abilities and skills:

- II-B-1. Develops the beliefs and vision of the school counseling program that align with current school improvement and student success initiatives at the school, district and state level
 - II-B-1a. Examines personal, district and state beliefs, assumptions and philosophies about student success, specifically what they should know and be able to do
 - II-B-1b. Demonstrates knowledge of a school's particular educational vision and mission
 - II-B-1c. Conceptualizes and writes a personal philosophy about students, families, teachers, school counseling programs and the educational process consistent with the school's educational philosophy and mission
 - II-B-1d. Writes a school counseling vision statement that describes a future world in which the school counseling goals and strategies are being successfully achieved
- II-B-2. Develops a school counseling mission statement aligning with the school, district and state mission
 - II-B-2a. Critiques a school district mission statement and identifies or writes a mission statement aligning with beliefs
 - II-B-2b. Writes a school counseling mission statement that is specific, concise, clear and comprehensive, describing a school counseling program's purpose and a vision of the program's benefits for every student
 - II-B-2c. Communicates the vision and mission of the school counseling program to all appropriate stakeholders

- II-B-3. Uses student standards, such as ASCA Student Standards and other appropriate student standards such as district or state standards, to drive the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program
- II-B-3a. Crosswalks the ASCA Student Standards with other appropriate student standards
- II-B-3b. Prioritizes student standards that align with the school's goals

- II-B-4. Applies the ethical standards and principles of the school counseling profession and adheres to the legal aspects of the role of the school counselor
- II-B-4a. Practices ethical principles of the school counseling profession in accordance with the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors
- II-B-4b. Understands the legal and ethical nature of working in a pluralistic, multicultural and technological society
- II-B-4c. Understands and practices in accordance with school district policy and local, state and federal statutory requirements
- II-B-4d. Understands the unique legal and ethical nature of working with minor students in a school setting
- II-B-4e. Advocates responsibly for school board policy and local, state and federal statutory requirements in students' best interests
- II-B-4f. Resolves ethical dilemmas by employing an ethical decision-making model appropriate to work in schools
- II-B-4g. Models ethical behavior
- II-B-4h. Continuously engages in professional development and uses resources to inform and guide ethical and legal work
- II-B-4i. Practices within the ethical and statutory limits of confidentiality
- II-B-4j. Continually seeks consultation and supervision to guide legal and ethical decision making and to recognize and resolve ethical dilemmas
- II-B-4k. Understands and applies an ethical and legal obligation not only to students but to parents, administration and teachers as well

II-C: Attitudes

School counselors demonstrate their attitudes and beliefs that all students deserve access to a comprehensive program that:

- II-C-1. Has an impact on every student rather than a series of services provided only to students in need
- II-C-2. Is an integral component of student success and the overall mission of the school and school district
- II-C-3. Promotes and supports academic achievement, career planning and personal/social development for every student
- II-C-4. Adheres to school and district policies, state laws and regulations and professional ethics standards
- II-C-5. Is intentional in addressing the information, opportunity and achievement gaps

III. MANAGEMENT

School counselors should possess the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to manage a school counseling program aligning with the ASCA National Model.

III-A: Knowledge

School counselors should articulate and demonstrate an understanding of:

- III-A-1. Leadership principles, including sources of power and authority and formal and informal leadership
- III-A-2. Organization theory to facilitate advocacy, collaboration and systemic change
- III-A-3. Presentation skills for programs such as teacher in-services, parent workshops and presentation of results reports to school boards
- III-A-4. Time management, including long- and short-term management using tools such as schedules and calendars
- III-A-5. Data-driven decision making
- III-A-6. Current and emerging technologies such as use of the Internet, Web-based resources and information management systems

III-B: Abilities and Skills

An effective school counselor is able to accomplish measurable objectives demonstrating the following abilities and skills:

- III-B-1. Self-evaluates his/her own competencies leading to and resulting in the formulation of an appropriate professional development plan
 - III-B-1a. Conducts a school counseling program assessment
 - III-B-1b. Negotiates a management plan for the comprehensive school counseling program with the administrator
 - III-B-1c. Discusses and develops the management component of the school counseling program with the other members of the school counseling staff
 - III-B-1d. Presents school counseling management tools to the principal, and finalizes an annual school counseling agreement
 - III-B-1e. Discusses the anticipated program results when implementing the action plans for the school year
 - III-B-1f. Participates in school counseling and education-related professional organizations
 - III-B-1g. Develops a yearly professional development plan demonstrating how the school counselor advances relevant knowledge, skills and dispositions
 - III-B-1h. Communicates effective goals and benchmarks for meeting and exceeding expectations consistent with the administrator/school counselor annual agreement and district performance appraisals
 - III-B-1i. Uses personal reflection, consultation and supervision to promote professional growth and development
- III-B-2. Establishes and convenes an advisory council for the comprehensive school counseling program
 - III-B-2a. Uses leadership skills to facilitate vision and positive change for the comprehensive school counseling program
 - III-B-2b. Determines appropriate education stakeholders who should be represented on the advisory council
 - III-B-2c. Develops effective and efficient meeting agendas
 - III-B-2d. Reviews school data, school counseling program assessment and school counseling program goals with the advisory council

- III-B-2e. Records meeting notes and distributes as appropriate
- III-B-2f. Analyzes and incorporates feedback from the advisory council related to school counseling program goals as appropriate

- III-B-3. Accesses or collects relevant data, including process, perception and outcome data, to monitor and improve student behavior and achievement
 - III-B-3a. Reviews and disaggregates student achievement, attendance and behavior data to identify and implement interventions as needed
 - III-B-3b. Uses data to identify policies, practices and procedures leading to successes, systemic barriers and areas of weakness
 - III-B-3c. Uses student data to demonstrate a need for systemic change in areas such as course enrollment patterns; equity and access; and achievement, opportunity and/or information gaps
 - III-B-3d. Understands and uses data to establish goals and activities to close the achievement, opportunity and/or information gap
 - III-B-3e. Knows how to use data to identify gaps between and among different groups of students
 - III-B-3f. Uses school data to identify and assist individual students who do not perform at grade level and do not have opportunities and resources to be successful in school
 - III-B-3g. Knows and understands theoretical and historical basis for assessment techniques

- III-B-4. Assesses use of time in direct and indirect student services and program management and school support
 - III-B-4a. Organizes and manages time to effectively implement a comprehensive school counseling program
 - III-B-4b. Identifies appropriate distribution of school counselor's time based on the school data and program goals
 - III-B-4c. Creates a rationale for school counselor's use of time in the delivery component to focus on the goals of the comprehensive school counseling program
 - III-B-4d. Identifies and evaluates fair-share responsibilities, which articulate appropriate and inappropriate counseling and non-counseling activities

- III-B-5. Develops calendars to ensure the effective implementation of the school counseling program
 - III-B-5a. Creates annual and weekly calendars to plan activities to reflect school counseling program goals
 - III-B-5b. Demonstrates time-management skills including scheduling, publicizing and prioritizing time and tasks

- III-B-6. Designs and implements action plans aligning with school and school counseling program goals
 - III-B-6a. Uses appropriate academic and behavioral data to develop school counseling core curriculum, small-group and closing-the-gap action plans and determines appropriate students for the target group or interventions
 - III-B-6b. Identifies ASCA domains, standards and competencies being addressed by each plan
 - III-B-6c. Creates lesson plans related to the school counseling core curriculum identifying what will be delivered, to whom it will be delivered, how it will be delivered and how student attainment of competencies will be evaluated
 - III-B-6d. Determines the intended impact on academics, attendance and behavior
 - III-B-6e. Identifies appropriate activities to accomplish objectives
 - III-B-6f. Identifies appropriate resources needed
 - III-B-6g. Identifies data-collection strategies to gather process, perception and outcome data
 - III-B-6h. Shares results of action plans with staff, parents and community.

- III-B-7. Implements program management and school support activities for the comprehensive school counseling program
- III-B-7a. Creates a program management and school support planning document addressing school counselor's responsibilities for program management and professional development
- III-B-7b. Coordinates activities that establish, maintain and enhance the school counseling program as well as other educational programs
- III-B-8. Conducts self-appraisal related to school counseling skills and performance

III-C: Attitudes

School counselors believe:

- III-C-1. A school counseling program/department must be managed like other programs and departments in a school
- III-C-2. Planning, organizing, implementing and evaluating a school counseling program are critical responsibilities for a school counselor
- III-C-3. Management of a school counseling program must be done in collaboration with administrators

IV. DELIVERY

School counselors should possess the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to deliver a school counseling program aligning with the ASCA National Model.

IV-A: Knowledge

School counselors should articulate and demonstrate an understanding of:

- IV-A-1. The distinction between direct and indirect student services
- IV-A-2. The concept of a school counseling core curriculum
- IV-A-3. Counseling theories and techniques that work in school, such as rational emotive behavior therapy, reality therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, Adlerian, solution-focused brief counseling, person-centered counseling and family systems
- IV-A-4. Counseling theories and techniques in different settings, such as individual planning, group counseling and classroom lessons
- IV-A-5. Classroom management
- IV-A-6. Principles of career planning and college admissions, including financial aid and athletic eligibility
- IV-A-7. Principles of working with various student populations based on characteristics such as ethnic and racial background, English language proficiency, special needs, religion, gender and income
- IV-A-8. Principles of multi-tiered approaches within the context of a comprehensive school counseling program
- IV-A-9. Responsive services (counseling and crisis response) including grief and bereavement
- IV-A-10. The differences between counseling, collaboration and consultation, especially the potential for dual roles with parents, guardians and other caretakers

IV-B: Abilities and Skills

An effective school counselor is able to accomplish measurable objectives demonstrating the following abilities and skills.

Direct Student Services

School Counseling Core Curriculum

- IV-B-1. Implements the school counseling core curriculum
- IV-B-1a. Identifies appropriate curriculum aligned to ASCA Student Standards
- IV-B-1b. Develops and presents a developmental school counseling core curriculum addressing all students' needs based on student data
- IV-B-1c. Demonstrates classroom management and instructional skills
- IV-B-1d. Develops materials and instructional strategies to meet student needs and school goals
- IV-B-1e. Encourages staff involvement to ensure the effective implementation of the school counseling core curriculum
- IV-B-1f. Knows, understands and uses a variety of technology in the delivery of school counseling core curriculum activities
- IV-B-1g. Understands multicultural and pluralistic trends when developing and choosing school counseling core curriculum
- IV-B-1h. Understands and is able to build effective, high-quality peer helper programs

Individual Student Planning

- IV-B-2. Facilitates individual student planning
- IV-B-2a. Understands individual student planning as a component of a comprehensive program
- IV-B-2b. Develops strategies to implement individual student planning, such as strategies for appraisal, advisement, goal-setting, decision-making, social skills, transition or post-secondary planning
- IV-B-2c. Helps students establish goals and develops and uses planning skills in collaboration with parents or guardians and school personnel
- IV-B-2d. Understands career opportunities, labor market trends and global economics and uses various career assessment techniques to help students understand their abilities and career interests
- IV-B-2e. Helps students learn the importance of college and other post-secondary education and helps students navigate the college admissions process
- IV-B-2f. Understands the relationship of academic performance to the world of work, family life and community service
- IV-B-2g. Understands methods for helping students monitor and direct their own learning and personal/social and career development

Responsive Services

- IV-B-3. Provides responsive services
- IV-B-3a. Lists and describes interventions used in responsive services, such as individual/small-group counseling and crisis response
- IV-B-3b. Understands appropriate individual and small-group counseling theories and techniques such as rational emotive behavior therapy, reality therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, Adlerian, solution-focused brief counseling, person-centered counseling and family systems
- IV-B-3c. Demonstrates an ability to provide counseling for students during times of transition, separation, heightened stress and critical change
- IV-B-3d. Understands what defines a crisis, the appropriate response and a variety of intervention strategies to meet the needs of the individual, group or school community before, during and after crisis response

- IV-B-3e. Provides team leadership to the school and community in a crisis
- IV-B-3f. Involves appropriate school and community professionals as well as the family in a crisis situation
- IV-B-3g. Understands the nature of academic, career and personal/social counseling in schools and the similarities and differences among school counseling and other types of counseling, such as mental health, marriage and family and substance abuse counseling, within a continuum of care
- IV-B-3h. Understands the role of the school counselor and the school counseling program in the school crisis plan

Indirect Student Services

Referrals

- IV-B-4a. Understands how to make referrals to appropriate professionals when necessary
- IV-B-4b. Compiles referral resources to utilize with students, staff and families to effectively address issues
- IV-B-4c. Develops a list of community agencies and service providers for student referrals

Consultation

- IV-B-5a. Shares strategies that support student achievement with parents, teachers, other educators and community organizations
- IV-B-5b. Applies appropriate counseling approaches to promoting change among consultees within a consultation approach
- IV-B-5c. Works with education stakeholders to better understand student needs and to identify strategies that promote student achievement

Collaboration

- IV-B-6a. Partners with parents, teachers, administrators and education stakeholders for student achievement and success
- IV-B-6b. Conducts in-service training or workshops for other stakeholders to share school counseling expertise
- IV-B-6c. Understands and knows how to provide supervision for school counseling interns consistent with the principles of the ASCA National Model

IV-C: Attitudes

School counselors believe:

- IV-C-1. School counseling is one component in the continuum of care that should be available to all students
- IV-C-2. School counselors coordinate and facilitate counseling and other services to ensure all students receive the care they need, even though school counselors may not personally provide the care themselves
- IV-C-3. School counselors engage in developmental counseling and short-term responsive counseling
- IV-C-4. School counselors should refer students to district or community resources to meet more extensive needs such as long-term therapy or diagnoses of disorders

V. ACCOUNTABILITY

School counselors should possess the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to monitor and evaluate the processes and results of a school counseling program aligning with the ASCA National Model.

V-A: Knowledge

School counselors should articulate and demonstrate an understanding of:

- V-A-1. Basic concepts of results-based school counseling and accountability issues
- V-A-2. Basic research sampling, methodology and analysis concepts to understand research outcomes and conduct action research
- V-A-3. Use of data to evaluate program effectiveness and to determine program needs
- V-A-4. School counseling program assessments and results reports

V-B: Abilities and Skills

An effective school counselor is able to accomplish measurable objectives demonstrating the following abilities and skills.

- V-B-1. Analyzes data from school data profile and results reports to evaluate student outcomes and program effectiveness and to determine program needs
- V-B-1a. Analyzes use of time to determine how much time is spent in school counseling program components and considers best use of time compared to student needs as identified through student data
- V-B-1b. Analyzes results from school counseling program assessment
- V-B-1c. Uses formal and informal methods of program evaluation to design and enhance comprehensive school counseling programs
- V-B-1d. Uses student data to support decision-making in designing effective school counseling programs and interventions
- V-B-1e. Measures and analyzes results attained from school counseling core curriculum, small group and closing-the-gap activities
- V-B-1f. Works with members of the school counseling team and with the administration to decide how school counseling programs are evaluated and how results are shared
- V-B-1g. Analyzes and interprets process, perception and outcome data
- V-B-1h. Reviews progress toward program goals
- V-B-1i. Uses technology in conducting research and program evaluation
- V-B-1j. Reports program results to the school counseling community
- V-B-1k. Uses data to demonstrate the value the school counseling program adds to student achievement
- V-B-1l. Uses results obtained for program improvement
- V-B-2. Understands and advocates for appropriate school counselor performance appraisal process based on school counselor competencies and implementation of the comprehensive school counseling program
- V-B-2a. Analyzes self-assessment related to school counseling skills and performance
- V-B-2b. Identifies how school counseling activities fit within categories of a performance appraisal instrument
- V-B-2c. Encourages administrators to use a performance appraisal instrument reflecting appropriate responsibilities for school counselors

- V-B-3a. Compares current school counseling program implementation with the ASCA National Model
- V-B-3b. Shares the results of the program assessment with administrators, the advisory council and other appropriate stakeholders
- V-B-3c. Identifies areas for improvement for the school counseling program

V-C: Attitudes

School counselors believe:

- V-C-1. School counseling programs should achieve demonstrable results
- V-C-2. School counselors should be accountable for the results of the school counseling program
- V-C-3. School counselors should use quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate their school counseling program and to demonstrate program results
- V-C-4. The outcomes of the school counseling program should be analyzed and presented in the context of the overall school and district performance



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