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**The School Counselor and Group Counseling**

(Adopted 1989; revised 1993, 2002, 2008; reviewed 1999, 2008, 2014, 2020, *draft 2026*)

**ASCA Position**

Group counseling is a vital direct service to students and an essential part of a school counseling program. Group counseling has a positive effect on academic, career and social/emotional development when delivered using evidence-based practices and should be supported by school administration to ensure groups can be facilitated effectively and students are readily able to access group services.

**The Rationale**

Group counseling involves a number of students working on shared tasks to develop knowledge, skills and supportive relationships in a group setting. It has been shown to be efficient and effective in improving academic outcomes (Kayler & Sherman, 2018; Berger, 2018; Steen et al., 2018), social/emotional competence, belonging and positive mental health development (Durlak et al., 2011; CDC, 2021). The group counseling process can help reduce social isolation, improve emotional regulation, increase positive peer relations and foster a sense of belonging (Howard & Pedroz, 2025). Group work in schools is an integral component of the ASCA National Model® (Erford, 2019; ASCA, 2019; Howard & Pedroz, 2025).

**The School Counselor’s Role**

School counselors provide evidence-based small-group counseling services in schools to support academic achievement, postsecondary and life readiness, social/emotional development and positive mental health development. Group counseling should be accessible to all students in a pre-K–12 setting, and data should be used to determine group topics and outcomes of group participation (ASCA, 2022). Ongoing professional development helps school counselors stay up to date on best practices for small-group counseling in schools (ASCA, 2026; Florida Atlantic University, 2025).

- School counselors provide counseling sessions in small-group settings that:
- help students overcome issues impeding achievement or success
  - help students identify problems, causes, alternatives and possible consequences so they can make decisions and take appropriate action
  - are planned, goal-focused, evidence-based and short-term in nature

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43 School counselors have a responsibility to screen potential group members  
44 and obtain informed assent. Informed consent should include the group's  
45 purpose and goals, limits to confidentiality and information regarding  
46 voluntary participation. Best practices include informing parents/guardians of  
47 student participation in and the purpose of the small group and student  
48 agreement to participate, following school and district policy (ASCA, 2022).  
49 When students require long-term counseling or services that require family  
50 therapy, school counselors make referrals to appropriate community  
51 resources (ASCA, 2019) and maintain collaborative relationships with  
52 providers to align service coordination.

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54 **Summary**

55 Group counseling is an efficient and effective way to meet students'  
56 academic, career and social/emotional needs. Group counseling is an  
57 integral part of a school counseling program and should be supported by  
58 school administrators and school districts. Group counseling has a positive  
59 effect on student academic achievement, postsecondary and life readiness,  
60 social/emotional development and positive mental health development.

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