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The School Counselor and School Counselor Preparation Programs (Adopted 2008, Revised 2014, 2020, 2026 draft)

ASCA Position

School counselors are best prepared through master’s-level programs that align with the philosophy and vision of the ASCA National Model®, the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies, the ASCA Standards for School Counseling Program Preparation, the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselor Education Faculty and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors. These programs emphasize training that helps ensure school counselors are equipped to establish, maintain and enhance a school counseling program that enhances life-readiness and academic success.

The Rationale

School counselor preparation programs are vital to the appropriate development of future school counselors. School counselor preparation programs equip school counseling students to address student needs by integrating professional and ethical standards into the design, implementation and assessment of school counseling programs. These programs ensure emerging school counselors can lead programs that promote success for each and every student (ASCA, 2024; Gilfillan et al., 2026).

The Impact on Emerging School Counselors

Effective school counselor preparation programs provide education that equips school counseling students to design, implement and assess school counseling programs in the pre-K–12 setting. These programs help students develop the knowledge, attitude and skills needed to demonstrate the following:

Professional Foundation – School counseling graduates are able to:

- Apply education and counseling knowledge, theories, principles, standards and competencies to inform the development and implementation of a school counseling program
- Apply knowledge of cultural, social and environmental influences to enhance student success and opportunities
- Provide leadership, advocacy and collaboration to create systemic change that enhances student success and opportunities

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Direct and Indirect Student Services – School counseling graduates are able to provide:

- Direct services to students including the continuum of classroom instruction, appraisal & advisement (Tier 1) and small-group and individual counseling (Tier 2). Direct services enhance student access, life-readiness and academic success through delivery of the ASCA Student Standards.
- Indirect services on behalf of students including referrals, consultation and collaboration provided on behalf of students through the school counselor’s interactions with others (Tiers 1, 2 and 3).

Planning and Assessment – School counseling graduates are able to:

- Articulate how the school counseling program aligns with the school and district vision and mission
- Identify achievement gaps
- Develop achievement gap plans based on student data
- Assess and report program impact
- Use time appropriately aligned with national recommendations
- Establish agreement about the school counseling program with the administrator in charge of the program
- Convene an advisory council for the school counseling program
- Use an appropriate school counselor performance appraisal process (ASCA, 2025b; Dollarhide et al, 2021; Goodman-Scott et al., 2023)

Field-based experiences are essential to the preparation of school counselors. These experiences should provide training aligned with the school counselor preparation program and further develop the students’ knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to implement a school counseling program. Field-based experiences are supervised by a fully licensed or certified school counselor in the pre-K–12 setting and a university supervisor with the appropriate school counselor educator qualifications.

School counselor preparation programs are facilitated by school counselor educators who have the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to prepare school counselors to promote each and every student’s academic, career and social/emotional development. School counselor educators have appropriate preparation and experience to understand and teach current issues and trends in school counseling. School counselor educators should hold an earned doctoral degree in counselor education, counseling psychology, educational leadership or a closely related field. Adjunct faculty/instructors will minimally have an earned master’s degree in school counseling and have significant school counseling experience. All university instructors should have experience as an employed school counselor.

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87 **Summary**

88 School counselor preparation programs emphasize the development of the
89 knowledge, attitudes and skills needed by emerging school counselors to
90 implement effective school counseling programs that empower each and
91 every student to succeed and achieve in their pre-K–12 experiences. These
92 programs align with the philosophy of the ASCA National Model®, the ASCA
93 School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies, the ASCA Ethical
94 Standards for School Counselor Education Faculty and the ASCA Ethical
95 Standards for School Counselors. School counselor educators have the
96 appropriate education, training, experience and commitment to prepare
97 school counselors to respond to the changing expectations and dynamics of
98 students, families, schools and communities.

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