

WHY MANDATE ELEMENTARY COUNSELORS?

In addition to being critical to children's successful development, identifying and helping elementary students at risk is **cost effective**. Elementary school counselors work with **all students**, providing early intervention through classroom activities and individual and group counseling. Their early intervention work also:

- 1 Improves student attendance, increasing state aid to school districts.
- 2 Reduces the need for remediation and academic intervention services.
- 3 Improves student performance on academic assessments.
- 4 Reduces discipline problems, resulting in fewer suspensions and the need for home-bound instruction.
- 5 Decreases the need for costly alternative education programs.
- 6 Reduces the drop-out rate, which is costly to society-at-large.
- 7 Improves the behavior of students at-risk for violent behavior, reducing costs from property damage, law suits, and rehabilitation.
- 8 Assists students in meeting New York State's Learning Standards at all grade levels.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Support the efforts of Assemblyman Felix Ortiz (D-Brooklyn) and State Senator Frank Padavan (D-Queens). These legislators recognize the impact school counselors have on the lives of all students. They've introduced legislation in their respective houses mandating school counselors be employed in every public school in New York State.

What can you do to ensure this legislation is passed? Contact your legislators by letter, phone or e-mail and tell them you support this Assembly bill 01962 and Senate bill 01684.

Not sure who your legislators are? Find them online according to your zip code. For Members of the Assembly, visit assembly.state.ny.us/mem. For State Senators, visit www.senate.state.ny.us and click on "Senators".

These bills can directly impact the lives of all students in New York state and help ensure more students meet today's challenging academic standards. Let your voice be heard. Write your legislators today.

Finally, pass this pamphlet on to others who care about the future of children in New York State.

The New York State School Counselor Association (NYSSCA), is the voice of school counselors in New York. A chartered division of the American School Counselor Association, NYSSCA is charged with promoting the work of professional school counselors across the state. Chief among its goals is program development, professional advocacy, and professional development.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELORS



HELPING STUDENTS MAKE THE GRADE



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THE STATE OF CHILDREN TODAY

- ✓ 1 in 3 children are behind a year or more in school.
- ✓ 1 in 4 live with only one parent.
- ✓ 2 in 5 never complete a single year of college.
- ✓ 1 in 5 were born poor.
- ✓ 1 in 5 were born to a mother that never graduated from high school.
- ✓ 3 in 5 preschoolers have a mother in the labor force.
- ✓ 1 in 8 never graduate from high school.
- ✓ 1 in 8 is born to a teenage mother.
- ✓ 1 in 12 has a disability.
- ✓ 1 in 24 lives with neither parent.
- ✓ 1 in 60 sees their parents divorce in any year.
- ✓ 1 in 1,056 will be killed by guns before age 20.

Source: (2001) The Children's Defense Fund, "25 key facts about American children," www.childrensdefense.org/keyfacts.html.

EVERYDAY IN AMERICA

- ✓ 1 young person under 25 dies from HIV infection.
- ✓ 5 people under 20 commit suicide.
- ✓ 9 people under 20 are homicide victims.
- ✓ 180 children are arrested for violent crimes.
- ✓ 367 children are arrested for drug abuse.
- ✓ 2,861 high school students drop out (based upon a 180 day school year).
- ✓ 4,248 children are arrested.
- ✓ 7,883 children are reported abused or neglected.
- ✓ 17,297 public school students are suspended (based upon a 180 day school year).

Source: (2002) The Children's Defense Fund, "Everyday in America," www.childrensdefense.org/everyday..htm.

WHY ELEMENTARY COUNSELORS?

For many people the word **counselor** brings to mind someone they saw a few times in high school to help them with their class schedules, testing, college applications, and discipline. Elementary counselors are responding to today's needs by providing children with comprehensive and developmental school counseling programs.

Elementary school years set the tone for developing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for our children to become healthy, productive adults. Within a comprehensive developmental guidance and counseling program, counselors work as a team with educators, parents, and community members to create a caring atmosphere whereby children's needs are met through prevention, early identification, and intervention.

DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

Elementary school is a time when students develop attitudes concerning school, self, peers, social groups, and family. It is a time when students develop decision-making, communication, and life training skills and character values. Comprehensive developmental guidance and counseling is based on prevention, providing goals that are integrated into all aspects of children's lives.

Early identification and intervention of children's problems are essential to change some of the current statistics regarding self-destructive behaviors. Unless students' developmental needs are addressed, they will never meet the challenging academic standards we've set for them.

ELEMENTARY COUNSELORS:

Implement effective classroom guidance programs focusing on understanding of 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 education; and multicultural awareness.

Provide individual and small group counseling dealing with self image and self esteem; personal adjustment; family issues; interpersonal concerns; academic development; peer facilitation and peer mediation.

Provide assessment by helping students identify their skills, abilities, achievements, and interests through counseling and guidance activities, and interpretation of standardized tests.

Work with specialized populations and needs that require special attention, such as culturally diverse populations and students with varying abilities.

Develop students' career awareness as a lifelong process of forming basic values, attitudes, and interests regarding their future world of work.

Coordinate school, community and business resources; school wide guidance related activities; and extracurricular programs which promote students' personal growth and skill development.

Provide consultation with teachers, administrators, school psychologists, school social workers, and outside agencies and social services concerning the welfare of the students.

Communicate and exchange information with families by way of conferences, parent education programs, and newsletters.