

Recommendations Regarding the Licensure, Regulations, and Support of New Jersey's School Counselors

Presentation for N.J. Assemblywoman
Angela V. McKnight
July 2, 2020



New Jersey School Counselor Association

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Vision Statement

To ensure that every school in the state of New Jersey has a Certified Professional School Counselor present daily, whose responsibilities are to serve the “whole child” through counseling-related duties, create data-driven prevention and intervention programs designed to keep our students safe in their school environment, and deliver a comprehensive School Counseling Program to promote college and career readiness skills and student achievement.

Today's Students

- **1 in 4** children have been exposed to a traumatic event that can affect learning and/or behavior.
- **1 in 5** children from birth to 18 years has a diagnosable mental disorder.
- Onset of mental illness may occur as early as 7-11 years old, and half begin by age 14.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for ages 10-24.
- Children who struggle with mental health may miss copious amounts of school, and their rates of suspension and expulsion are three times higher than children without a mental health concern or illness.
- Of school-aged children who receive any behavioral or mental health services, 70-80% of them receive them only at school.

Students' unmet mental health needs pose barriers to development and learning, and can compromise school safety.

Yet, in the state of New Jersey, no policy mandates the presence of a School Counselor, nor is specific training or curriculum required.

References are made only to the following:

NJAC 6A: 8-3.2; iii (1-3)

District boards of education shall implement a developmental career guidance and career awareness program, linked to the Core Curriculum Content Standards, which:

- I. Is infused throughout the K-12 curriculum as appropriate for all students;
- II. Is supported by professional development programs;
- III. *Takes into consideration* the Career Development Standards of the National Standards for School Counseling Programs of the **American School Counselor Association** in the following three areas of student development:
 - (1) academic development
 - (2) career development
 - (3) personal/social development.



Today's School Counselor

From Guidance Counselor to School Counselor, there's more than just a name change...

- The old 'Guidance' certificate, prior to the 1980's, required a limited number of additional classes for teachers to obtain a post-baccalaureate counseling certification.
- By the 1990's, a Master's Degree in Student Personnel Services with (48 graduate credit hours) was required for certification.
- In 2004, the endorsement changed to that of 'School Counselor' and it no longer required a teaching certificate. Programs offered for School Counseling now range from 48-60 credits.
- Many School Counselors practicing today, have received pre-service training that meets the N.J. Board of Marriage and Family Therapy degree requirements for Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC).

Facts

- 2016 figures show that 725 schools in N.J. do not have a School Counselor present. That means 195,048 N.J. students have no direct access to a school counselor. ([NJDOE Fact Sheet](#))
- Per ASCA research from 2018-2019, the average student-to-school counselor ratio in N.J. is 358:1. The National recommended average is 250:1. ([ASCA Student-to-School Counselor Ratios 2018-2019](#))

NJSCA's Six Recommendations

Recommendation #1:

Embed 'School Counselors' in NJDOE Administrative Code-
Mandating the Daily Presence of a School Counselor in Every School

Recommendation #2:

Mandate a (250:1) Student to School Counselor Ratio

Recommendation #3:

Adopt an ASCA-based Model for N.J. Schools'
Comprehensive School Counseling Programs

Recommendation #4:

Require ASCA-based Model Pre-Service and First-Year of Service
School Counselor Training Programs

Recommendation #5

Require (5 yr) Recertification Process ASCA-based Model Evaluation
and Mandate Job Specific Professional Development Training

Recommendation #6:

Create a School Counseling Liaison within NJDOE
to Coordinate Expectations, Resources, & Recertification

Recommendation #1:

Embed ‘School Counselors’ in NJDOE Administrative Code, Mandating the Daily Presence of a School Counselor

NJSCA suggests that professional school counselors be written into the language of the document, *mandating the daily presence of a School Counselor in every school*, with specific reference of counseling duties impacting NJ Administrative Code sections of:

- Standards and assessment
- Programs and practices to support student achievement
- Special education
- Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Prevention
- Bilingual education
- Career Technical Education (CTE)
- Homeless children
- Equality and equity
- Programs to support student development
- Professional development for “teaching staff members and school leaders”
- Social Emotional Learning and NJ’s Tiered System of Supports
- Etc....

Recommendation #2:

Mandate a 250:1 Student to School Counselor Ratio

In schools fortunate enough to have a full-time school counselor, positive impact is made daily by improving student achievement, promoting student attendance, and reducing behavioral issues through the following duties:

- I&RS Team Coordination
- 504 Planning and Coordination of Supports
- School-wide Classroom Counseling Lessons and Programs which promote NJ's Tiered System of Supports(NJTSS)
- Individual and Group Counseling
- Responsive Services/ Crisis Response
- State Required- Harassment, Intimidation & Bullying Prevention
- School Safety/Climate Committee Coordination
- Career and College Readiness Programming
- Social Work: Pairing Families with Community Supports

Recommendation #3:

Adopt an ASCA-based Model for N.J. Schools' Comprehensive School Counseling Programs

Currently, the majority of N.J. School Counselor preparation programs are accredited by The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).

- CACREP has a mental health/clinical counseling focus.
- The training and education provided in CACREP programs is the same for a school counselor as a community mental health provider.
- **However, the ASCA model can and should be taught within CACREP programs; they are not mutually exclusive.**

Comprehensive ASCA Program:

- * Driven by student data
- * Based on standards in academic, career & social/emotional development
 - * Comprehensive in scope
 - * Preventive in design
 - * Developmental in nature
- * Based on a collaborative effort between the school counselor, parents and other educators

ASCA National Model:

- * Ensures equitable access to a rigorous education for all students
- * Identifies the skills all students will acquire as a result of the K-12 comprehensive school counseling program

ASCA National Model

The ASCA Curricula Programs:

- * Delivered to all students in a systematic fashion
- * Based on data-driven decision making
- * Provided by a New Jersey state-credentialed school counselor

ASCA Recommendations:

- * School Counselor to Student Ratio of 1:250
- * School Counselors spend 80 percent or more of their time in direct and indirect services to students.

Benefits of an ASCA-Based Comprehensive School Counseling Program (CSCP)

A CSCP Helps Students By:

- Fostering effective and efficient learning
- Providing mental health/crisis/trauma supports
- Linking educational understanding with academic and career plans
- Increasing college and career readiness skills
- Facilitating improved academic achievement
- Providing curricular instruction in academic, career and personal-social development

A CSCP Helps Parents By:

- Expanding opportunities to become involved in academic and career planning
- Connecting students and families to community mental health supports
- Supporting the role of parents in raising academic and career aspirations
- Building parent-teacher-student-counselor partnerships

Benefits of an ASCA-Based CSCP Continued

A CSCP Helps Teachers By:

- Offering positive supportive relationships for students & staff
- Provides support/guidance in crisis response
- Creating a team approach to working with students
- Promoting a common vocabulary for academic, career and personal/social development
- Collaborating with educators on behalf of the best interests of students

A CSCP Helps Administration By:

- Cultivating a structured program with specific competencies for all students
- Provides coordination/support of crisis team response
- Demonstrating accountability through the evaluation of its programs
- Organizing a system-wide delivery of academic, career, and personal/social career competencies
- Contributing to an increase in student achievement

Benefits of an ASCA-Based CSCP Continued

A CSCP Helps the B.O.E. By:

- Coordinating district-wide school counseling activities
- Establishing a clear understanding of the school counseling program
- Providing services to increase student achievement and attendance.

A CSCP Helps Employers By:

- Increasing personal management, teamwork, work ethic and technical skills in prospective employees
- Guiding a larger pool of prospective employees with meaningful career plans

School Counselors Make a Difference!

Schools with lower school counselor to student ratios had statistically significant lower rates of student suspensions and fewer disciplinary incidents

(Lapan, Whitcomb, & Aleman, 2012)

Students with access to school counselors and comprehensive school counseling programs are more likely to achieve academically and behaviorally; particularly students in high-poverty schools (Lapan, Gysbers, Bragg, & Pierce, 2012)

A comprehensive school counseling program in every elementary, middle, and high school is a necessary component of any effort directed at school safety

(Nims, 2000)

Students in schools with more fully implemented school counseling programs had a more positive perception of school climate and safety within their school

(Lapan, Gysbers, & Petroski, 2001).

School counselors can be catalysts for identifying students with depression and suicidal thoughts (Erickson & Abel, 2013)

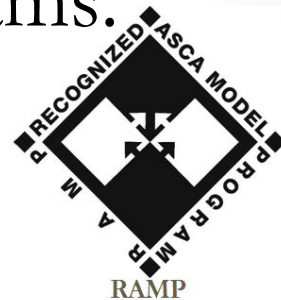
Professional Development Recommendation: Provide Ongoing PD based on Recognized American School Counseling Association (RAMP) Model Programs Goals

The American School Counselor Association developed the Recognized ASCA Model Program designation to recognize school counseling programs that are committed to delivering comprehensive, data-driven, accountable school counseling programs.



ASCA National Model
The American School Counselor Association

ASCA RAMP Exemplary Goals



Recognized ASCA Model Program

Recommendation #4:

Require ASCA Model Pre-Service and First-Year of Service School Counselor Training Programs

Education of Pre-Service School Counselors should be provided by accredited colleges and should include:

- Foundations and Role of ASCA Model School Counselor
- Comprehensive School Counseling Program Implementation
- Data-Driven Practices (keeping RAMP Goals in mind)
- Mental Health Education/Crisis Response Initiatives
- Suicide Prevention/Pre-Screening Training
- NJ's Tiered System of Support Initiatives and PBIS
- College and Career Readiness Standards
- College Preparation and Career Readiness Training Programs
- Financial Aid Planning
- Cultural Competence/Cultural Responsiveness
- NJ SEL Initiatives and Programming
- NJSCA Activities and Guidance for Intern Supervision

Mentoring and Evaluation

Currently there are no specific Mentor Requirements for First-Year School Counselors in N.J., nor are there Evaluation Tools mandated specifically for practicing School Counselors to be used in annual reviews.

NJSCA suggests the following:

- Require new School Counselors go through a mentor program
- [NJSCA Comprehensive School Counseling Mentoring Program](#)
- [NJSCA Intern and New Counselor Guide](#)
- Require district administrative staff and practicing counselors to be trained in implementing the [NJSCA Evaluation Model](#) for annual review purposes
- **Require that School Counselors receive supervision by administrators with experience in counseling**

Recommendation #5

Require (5 yr) Recertification Process ASCA based Model Evaluation and Mandate Job Specific Professional Development Training

Currently, there is no Re-Certification requirement nor are there specific elements required of PD per year for training in the duties of the School Counselor. Many counselors are denied professional leave time to attend more appropriate training, and instead get lumped in with district provided PD which generally does not provide training in the special area needs of the School Counseling profession.

NJSCA recommends that counselors be required to apply for ReCertification every 5 years and that they be given adequate leave time and funding to seek training in the following areas:

- Data Collection and Assessment
- Promotion of Mental Health Awareness
- Suicide Prevention-Intervention
- Crisis/Trauma Counseling
- Increasing Attendance Rates
- NJ's Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) approaches, such as Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS)
- College/Career advisement/ FAFSA training
- Cultural Competence/Cultural Responsiveness

Recommendation #6:

Create a School Counseling Liaison within NJDOE to Coordinate Expectations, Resources, & Recertification

NJDOE has the ability to be a viable and valuable resource to the school counselors across the state. By facilitating a comprehensive component of NJDOE's website, school counselors from all over the state can access valuable resources at their fingertips regarding curriculum, assessments, evaluations, data, etc.

NJSCA recommends a NJDOE School Counseling Department be created to:

- Establish Model Curriculum, Assessments, and Evaluations
- Provide oversight/establish universal proficiencies for all School Counseling Graduate programs in N.J.
- Provide oversight/establish requirements for districts in creating meaningful professional development for School Counselors
- Provide oversight/establish requirements for appropriately-trained and certified personnel to evaluate School Counselors
- Provide oversight/require Appropriate Direct Counseling Duties
- Coordinate the proposed (5 Yr) Recertification Process

Advocacy to Support All



**Increase Student
Access to
School Counselors**

**Train & Utilize
School Counseling
Staff Appropriately**



Local Partners in Supporting Student Mental Health Initiatives



RUTGERS.
Division of Diversity, Inclusion,
and Community Engagement

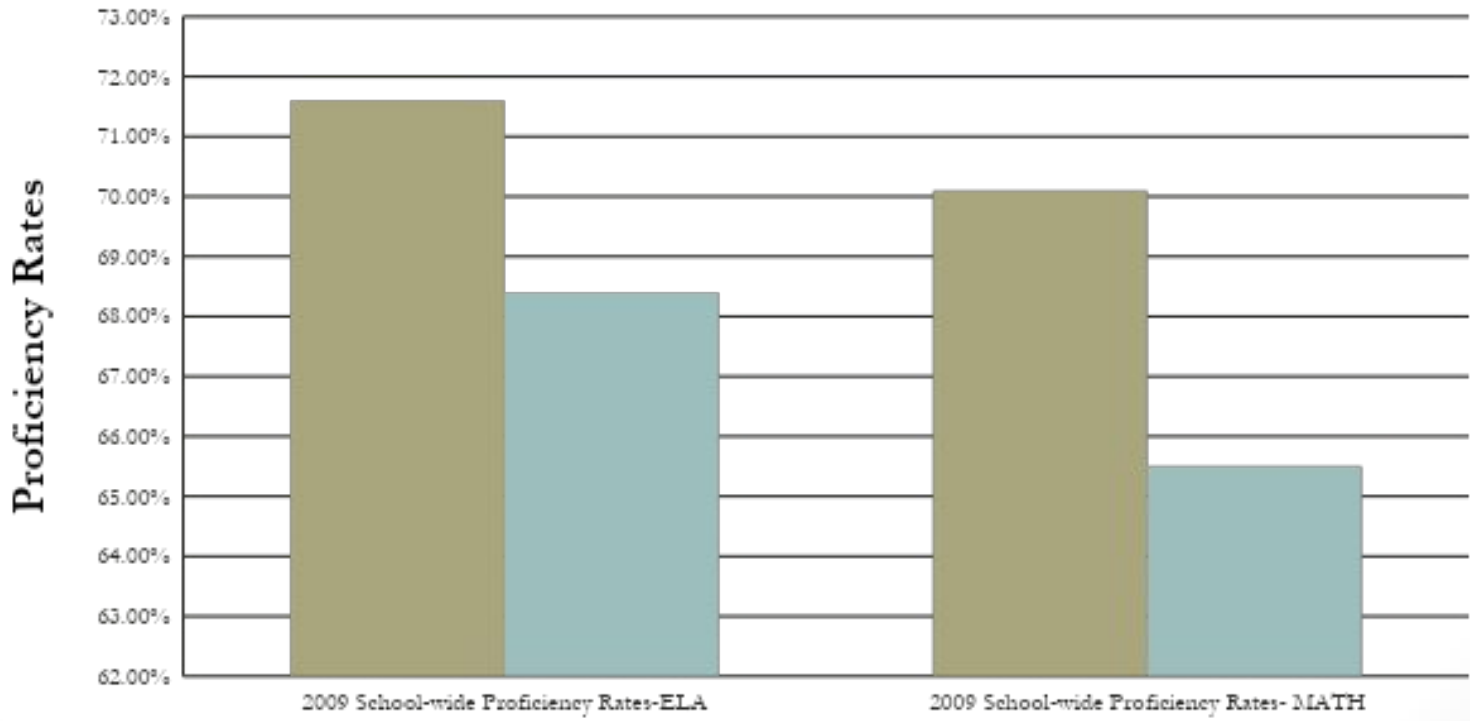
Collaborative Center
for Community-Based
Research and Service



Research & Data

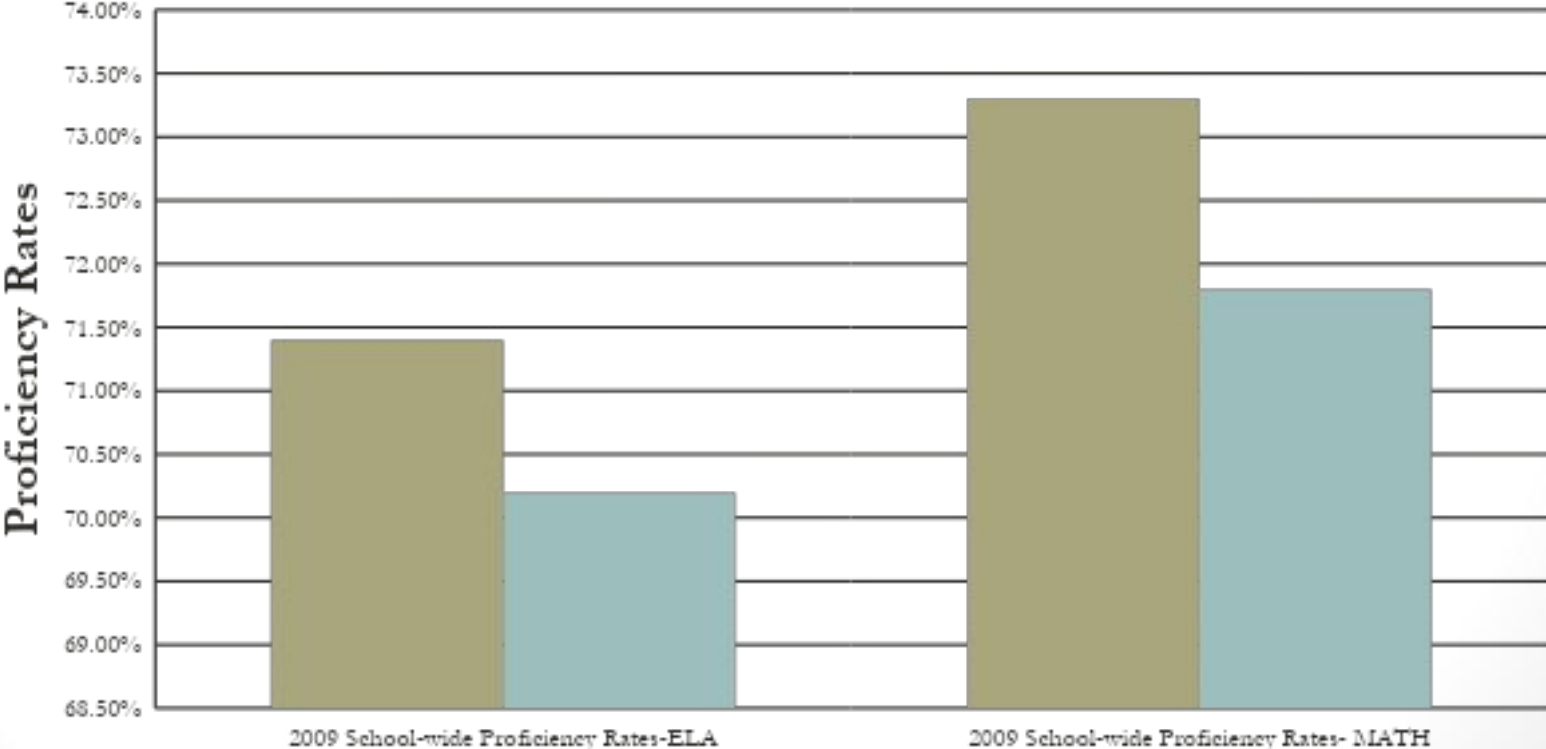
Data to Support the Implementation of RAMP Programs (High School)

A Comparative Analysis
34 **RAMP** Secondary Schools
versus
101 **Non-RAMP** Secondary Schools



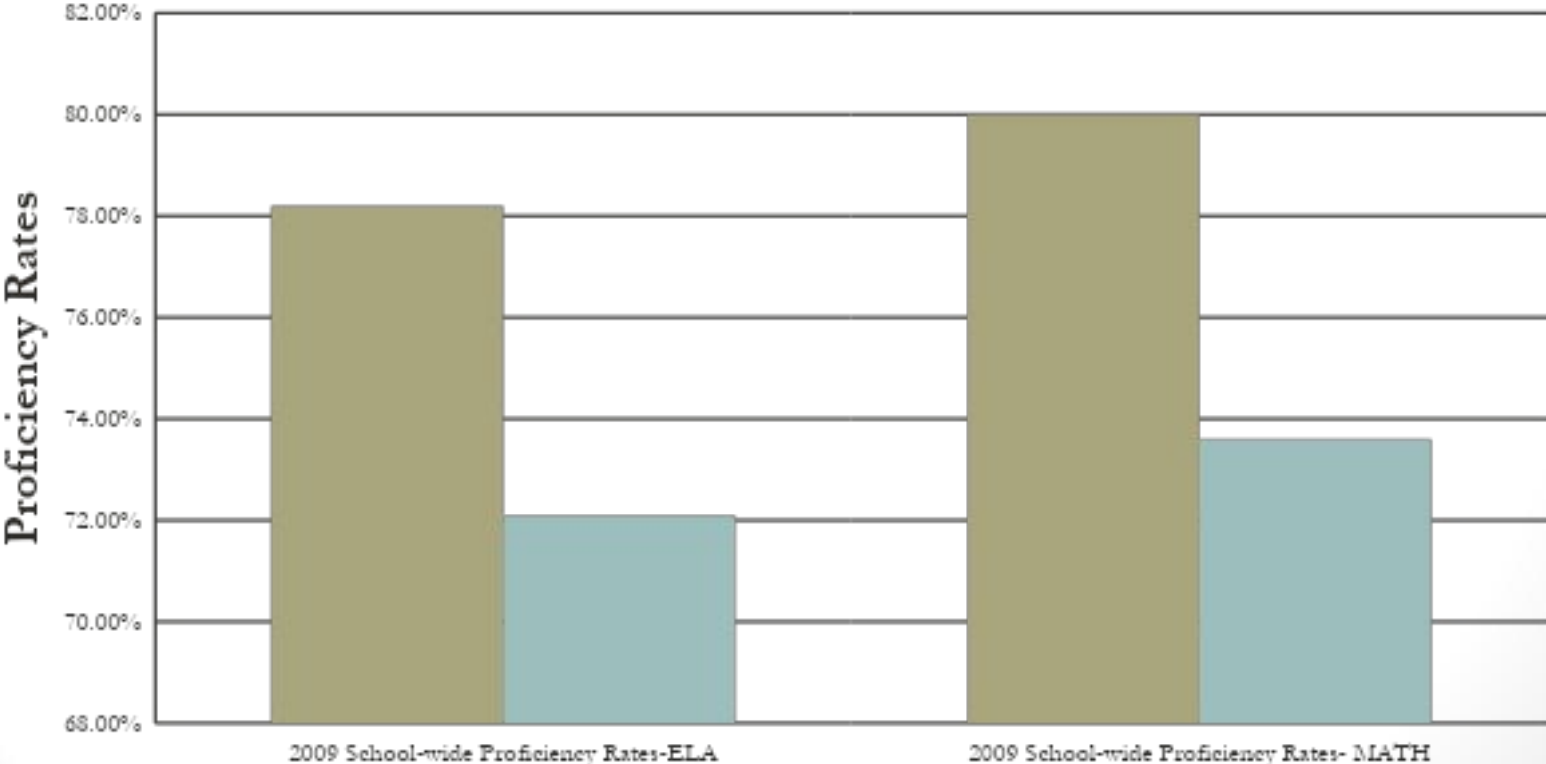
Data to Support the Implementation of RAMP Programs (Middle School)

A Comparative Analysis
17 **RAMP** Middle Schools
versus
53 **Non-RAMP** Middle Schools



Data to Support the Implementation of RAMP Programs (Elementary School)

A Comparative Analysis
24 **RAMP** Elementary Schools
versus
72 **Non-RAMP** Elementary Schools



Kevin Wilkerson, Ph.D., NCC, ACS, Rachelle Perusse, Ph.D., NCC, NCSC, and Ashley Hughes, MS, NCC
"Comprehensive School Counseling Programs and Student Achievement Outcomes: A Comparative Analysis of RAMP Versus Non-RAMP Schools" Professional School Counseling Volume: 16, Number: 3 2013

Research to Support the Implementation of Programs to Enhance Students' Social and Emotional Learning

The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: a meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions

- ~11 % Increase in Student Achievement
- ~10 % Decrease in Anti-Social Behavior
- ~10 % Increase in Positive Behavior

Durlak, JA, Weissberg , RP, Dymnicki , AB, Taylor, RD, Schellinger, KB, Child Development. 2001 Jan-Feb, 82 (1): 405-32

Links & Resources

Comprehensive School Counseling Models from Other States:

- [Alabama DOE](#)
- [Arkansas DOE](#)
- [Arizona DOE](#)
- [California DOE](#)
- [Connecticut DOE](#)
- [Delaware DOE](#)
- [Florida DOE](#)
- [Georgia DOE](#)
- [Illinois DOE](#)
- [Indiana DOE](#)
- [Maryland DOE](#)
- [Missouri DOE](#)
- [Nevada DOE](#)
- [New York DOE](#)
- [Ohio DOE](#)
- [Oregon DOE](#)
- [Rhode Island DOE](#)
- [Utah DOE](#)
- [Virginia DOE](#)
- [Washington DOE](#)
- [West Virginia DOE](#)
- [Wisconsin DOE](#)

School Counseling Resources

- The American School Counseling Association (2019) The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs, Third Edition. Alexandria, VA.
- American School Counselor Association (2019). ASCA National Standards for Students. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- New Jersey School Counselor Association (2005) The New Jersey School Counseling Initiative: A Framework for Developing Your Comprehensive School Counseling Program, Second Edition.
- [ASCA Statement on Appropriate School Counseling Duties](#)
- [ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors](#)
- [ASCA Position Statements for School Counselors](#)