

SCHOOL COUNSELLING

School counselling takes place in public and private school settings in grades K-12. Counselling is designed to facilitate student achievement, improve student behavior and attendance, and help students develop socially. [Mental health professionals](#) with master's degrees or beyond, school counsellors both provide counselling and serve an educational role in and around schools. Many schools have full-time counsellors on staff in order to support students who are experiencing personal or [academic challenges](#), help students choose careers and plan for college, and intervene when students face behavioral, physical, or mental health challenges.

HISTORY OF SCHOOL COUNSELING:

In the early 20th century, as industrial centers grew throughout the United States, secondary schools began to increase their focus on courses that would help prepare students to enter the workforce. Some teachers doubled as vocational counsellors in order to assist in these efforts.

- **1917:** Specific legislation is drafted to provide funding for vocational guidance programs. Following this, the school guidance counselling profession grows.
- **1920s:** New York becomes the first state to develop certification requirements for school counsellors.
- **1930s:** Urban elementary schools begin to offer school counselling services.
- **1950s:** The [humanistic psychology](#) and [person-centered psychology](#) movements gaining traction lead the focus of school counselling to undergo a significant shift.
- **1970s:** School counselling incorporates wider goals of helping students develop socially, personally, and academically.
- **1990s:** A nationwide shift toward standards-based education and the adoption of legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act make it necessary for school counsellors to find increasingly innovative ways to serve students.

WHAT DO SCHOOL COUNSELORS DO?

School counsellors, also known as guidance counsellors, were first primarily responsible for facilitating career development. Today, the role of the school counsellor is multifaceted and may vary greatly, depending on the requirements of both the state and each individual school.

The duties of school counsellors may include:

- **Providing instruction on psychological and social issues.** School counselors might teach [sex](#) education classes, provide information to students about [bullying](#), or offer seminars on study skills.
- **Vocational guidance.** Many school counselors help students prepare for college or select careers.
- **Counseling.** School counselors often help students mediate conflicts with their peers, teachers, or parents. Many school counselors also provide short-term counseling services to students during school hours.
- **Early intervention.** School counselors receive training about [learning difficulties](#) and psychological concerns that commonly manifest in children and adolescents. They may also provide referrals, recommendations, and education to parents about mental health concerns.
- **Special needs services.** Counselors often help special needs students integrate into classrooms and may oversee programs that address requirements for students with special needs or learning difficulties.

Further, counsellors often help students:

- Maintain academic standards and set goals for academic success.
- Develop skills to improve organization, study habits, and time management.
- Work through personal problems that may affect academics or relationships.
- Improve social skills.
- Cope with school or community-related violence, accidents, and [trauma](#).
- Identify interests, strengths, and aptitudes through assessment.

School counselors offer individual counseling to help students resolve personal or interpersonal problems. They may also offer small group counseling to help students enhance listening and social skills, learn to empathize with others, and find social support through healthy peer relationships. For students who are otherwise unable to access mental health services, school counselors provide support at no cost. School counselors also provide support to school staff by assisting with classroom management techniques and the development of programs to improve mental health or school safety. When necessary, counselors may also intervene in a disrupted learning environment.

REQUIRED TRAINING FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS

School Counselling

School counselors must complete a master's degree, at minimum, in school counseling, psychology, or social work and obtain the relevant state certification, endorsement, or licensure to gain employment. This may involve taking a comprehensive exam and logging hours in a supervised counseling setting. In many cases, counselors will need to complete an internship or practicum, and some states also require previous teaching experience.

School counselors are required to renew their licensure every three to five years. This timeline depends on the requirements of the state in which they are employed. In order to renew licensure, continuing education classes or professional development courses are generally necessary.

Many states require public schools to provide school counseling services, and these programs are funded at the state or local level. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends a student-to-school-counselor ratio of 250:1, although the average ratio is currently 471:1.

DO SCHOOL COUNSELORS DIAGNOSE MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS?

Serious diagnosable mental health conditions affect 21% of U.S. children between the ages of 9 and 17, but only 20% of these children obtain a [diagnosis](#) and receive treatment in any given year. While school counselors may suspect the presence of [learning](#)

[difficulties](#) or other conditions such as [ADHD](#), they are not licensed to diagnose or prescribe medication. Some schools do have school psychiatrists, however, and these professionals are able to prescribe medication to students, though parental permission is typically necessary.

When a school counselor suspects the presence of a learning, behavioral, or mental health concern, they will typically provide a referral to a specialist in the community. Learning difficulties can be diagnosed by school or educational psychologists or neuropsychologists, and ADHD is generally diagnosed by psychiatrists, physicians, or clinical psychologists in private practice.