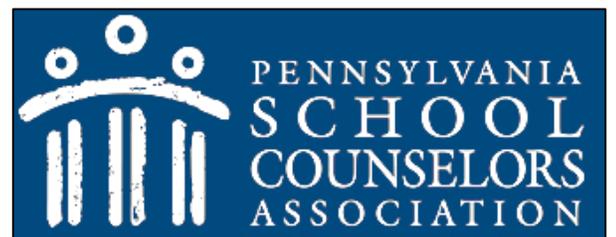


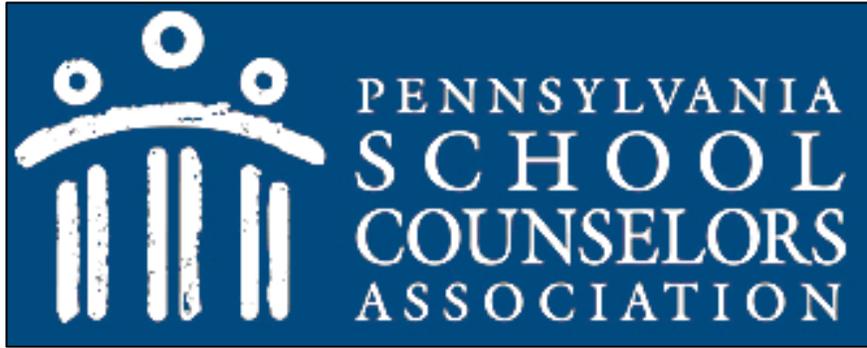
Pennsylvania School Counselor Staffing Report

Volume III

SY 2021-2022

A REVIEW OF PENNSYLVANIA'S
STUDENT TO SCHOOL COUNSELOR RATIOS





The mission of the Pennsylvania School Counselors Association is to expand the image and influence of professional school counselors, to promote professional and ethical practice, and to advocate for equity and access for all students.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

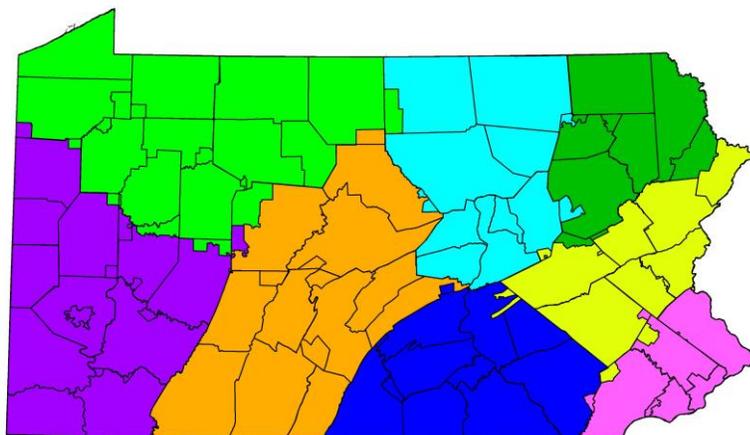
Emilia Peiffer

PSCA OFFICERS

Jennifer Kirk, *Chair of the Board*

Larissa Valonis, *Assistant Chair of the Board*

Alicia Oglesby, *Secretary*



Special thanks is given to Adam Oldham and the PSCA Government Relations committee for their work in developing this report.

PSCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Northeastern Region

Larissa Valonis (2025)
Zachary Walters (2024)

North Central Region

Noreen Wheeler (2024)
Regina Edgerton (2025)

Northwestern Region

Michael Simmons (2025)
Michelle Strasser (2024)

Southwestern Region

Sima Misquitta (2024)
Lezlie DelVecchio-Marks (2025)

Central Region

Tori Wilsoncroft (2024)
Janelle Reese (2025)

South Central Region

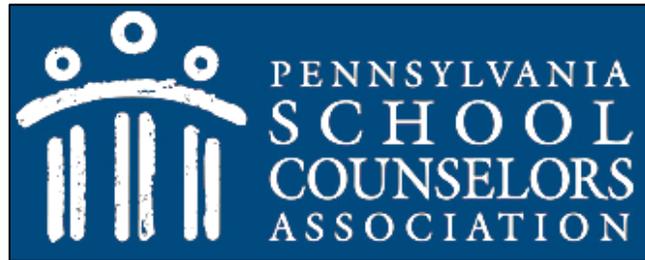
Adam Oldham (2024)
Matthew Shervington (2025)

Central Eastern Region

Amanda Hicks (2024)
Brandi McFarland (2025)

Southeastern Region

Heather Karmazin (2025)
Kelly Leibold (2024)



What is This Report For?

This report is designed **to educate and empower school counselors** across Pennsylvania as they advocate for the investment in school counseling positions and programs in our K-12 education system.

This report is designed **to inform and spark interest with our legislative partners and elected officials** who set education policy, establish appropriations and funding, and who have the capacity to instill the value of school counselors and school counseling programs into law.

This report will serve as an **annual reference point** for the numbers and ratios of school counselors employed in Pennsylvania.

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS ARE AT A CRISIS POINT

The challenges today's generation of young people face are unprecedented and uniquely hard to navigate. **And the effect these challenges have had on their mental health is devastating.**

-Dr. Vivek H. Murthy

Surgeon General of the United States

Protecting Youth Mental Health, The US Surgeon General's Advisory (2021)

The vast majority of K-12 students have suffered significant learning losses of half a year or greater. **Substantial numbers of students have continued falling further behind normal levels of learning for their age and grade.** Students with disabilities have suffered disproportionate academic impact.

-Center for Reinventing Public Education

The State of the American Student: A Guide to Pandemic Recovery and Reinvention (2022)

As we saw in the 10 years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, **mental health among students overall continues to worsen**, with more than 40% of high school students feeling so sad or hopeless that they could not engage in their regular activities for at least two weeks during the previous year—a possible indication of the experience of depressive symptoms. We also saw significant increases in the percentage of youth who seriously considered suicide, made a suicide plan, and attempted suicide.

-Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2023)

Almost 70% of Pennsylvania students reported moderate or high levels of depression. One in four students report feeling like a failure. **One in five students report seriously considering suicide.**

-*Pennsylvania Youth Survey (2021)*



Every Task Force meeting included requests from multiple participants to **increase the number of both physical and mental health professionals in schools**. Task Force participants specifically requested additional nurses, social workers, psychologists, **school counselors**, and other support staff in schools to help meet students' needs.

PA School Safety Task Force Report (2018)

PA Office of Auditor General

School counselors are a critical part of Pennsylvania's vision to help all students translate their interests and aspirations into tangible college and career plans and choices.

However, **many school counselors are stretched thin, juggling several responsibilities and significant case loads, and are often isolated in their work.**

State Consolidated Plan, Every Student Succeeds Act (2019)

PA Department of Education

Understanding there is an acute need to improve students' mental health, and schools are one of the best places to provide support before mental health problems escalate, the Office of Attorney General has called for **increasing the number of mental health counselors** in schools every year since the Safe2Say Something program launched in 2019.

Special Report on Student Mental Health (2022)

PA Office of Attorney General

The Court heard extensive credible testimony from educational professionals and experts as to how other professional staff...such as guidance counselors, social workers, nurses, psychologists, and other support staff...help students succeed. There was evidence that low-income students often require more support, **so an adequate number of counselors is needed to meet those needs.**

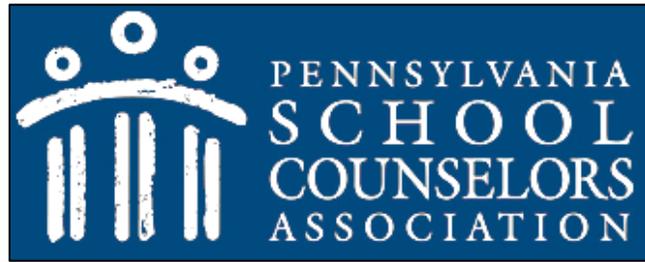
While it is true that there was testimony that several of the districts have some of these personnel, **there was also testimony that it was the bare minimum required by law, of an insufficient quantity to actually meet student needs.**

William Penn SD et al. v PA Department of Education (2023)

Judge Renee Cohn Jubelirer

PA Commonwealth Court





CALL TO ACTION

School Counselors for All Students

Defined Scope of Practice

Reasonable

Student to School Counselor Ratios

A Certified School Counselor
for Every Level

A Certified School Counselor
for Every Building

Who are School Counselors?

(The Role of the School Counselor, American School Counselor Association)

School counselors are certified educators who improve student success for all students by implementing a comprehensive school counseling program.



SCHOOL COUNSELOR QUALIFICATIONS

- ▶ Hold, at minimum, a master's degree in school counseling
- ▶ Meet the state certification/licensure standards
- ▶ Fulfill continuing education requirements
- ▶ Uphold ASCA ethical and professional standards



Also employed in district supervisory positions; and school counselor education positions

Direct Services with Students

Direct services are in-person interactions between school counselors and students and include the following:

- Instruction
- Appraisal and Advisement
- Counseling



LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBERS

School counselors work to maximize student success, promoting access and equity for all students. As vital members of the school leadership team, school counselors create a school culture of success for all.

- ▶ School counselors help all students:
 - apply academic achievement strategies
 - manage emotions and apply interpersonal skills
 - plan for postsecondary options (higher education, military, work force)
- ▶ Appropriate duties include providing:
 - individual student academic planning and goal setting
 - school counseling classroom lessons based on student success standards
 - short-term counseling to students
 - referrals for long-term support
 - collaboration with families/teachers/ administrators/ community for student success
 - advocacy for students at individual education plan meetings and other student-focused meetings
 - data analysis to identify student issues, needs and challenges
 - acting as a systems change agent to improve equity and access, achievement and opportunities for all students

Indirect Services for Students

Indirect services are provided on behalf of students as a result of the school counselors' interactions with others including:

- Consultation
- Collaboration
- Referrals

SCHOOL COUNSELING IN PENNSYLVANIA

CERTIFIED EDUCATORS

**EDUCATIONAL
SPECIALIST**
(22 Pa. Code 49.1)

**ELEMENTARY AND
SECONDARY SCHOOL
COUNSELOR**
(CSPG #76)

EXISTING PLAN FRAMEWORK

**K-12 STUDENT
SERVICES PLAN**
(22 Pa. Code 12)

K-12 GUIDANCE PLAN
(22 Pa. Code 339)

As described in the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s Certification and Staffing Policies and Guidelines, school counselors are responsible for the development of a comprehensive school counseling program, and collaborate with others to meet student needs in three areas – academic development, career development, and personal-social development.

According to the PA Code, school counseling is considered a developmental “student service” that, along with other student services, should support students throughout their enrollment in school K-12. No definitions exist for school counselors or school counseling programs in the PA Code.

Vocational guidance is to be delivered to all students according to the PA Code, but the PA Code does not specify who is responsible for delivering this comprehensive, sequential program of guidance services.

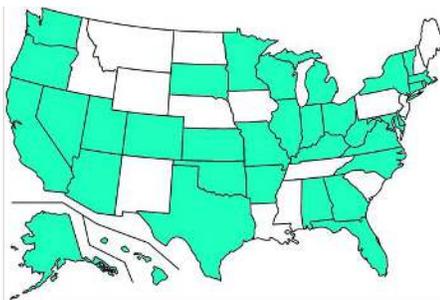
The existing framework in Pennsylvania is too broad and vague to guarantee students are receiving school counseling services.

School Counselors in American Schools

School counseling services in schools are commonplace across the United States.

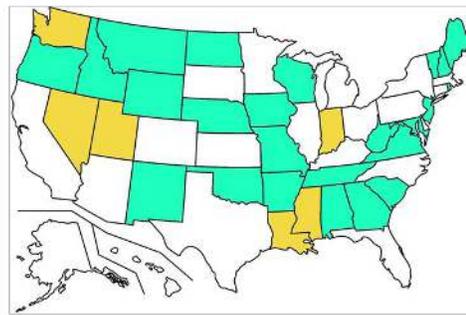
The two primary ways states incorporate school counseling services into schools are (1) requiring districts to develop comprehensive school counseling programs and (2) mandating school counselor positions in school buildings.

Pennsylvania is the ONLY state that does not require comprehensive school counseling programs or mandated school counseling positions in schools.



**35
states**

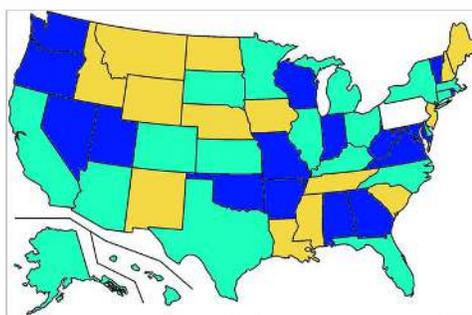
Comprehensive school counseling programs required in public school districts



**30
states**

Legend: ■ K-8 AND 9-12 School Counselors Mandated ■ 9-12 School Counselors Mandated

School counselors required in public school districts



**49
states**

Legend: ■ State Comprehensive School Counseling Plan/Framework ■ Partial Public K-12 School Counselor Mandate ■ Both

Why Student to School Counselor Ratios Matter



IDEAL CASELOAD

250 students per school counselor



The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends a student to school counselor ratio of 250:1

Research demonstrates that lower student-to-school-counselor ratios are associated with higher student achievement measures, better graduation rates, and lower disciplinary incidents (Lapan et al., 2012; Goodman-Scott et al., 2018; Parzych et al., 2019)

Nationally, school counselor ratios are significantly higher, with the most recent comparison estimating a national average ratio of 408:1 (ASCA, 2022)

ASCA reports that Pennsylvania's ratio for the 2021-2022 school year was 343:1 (ASCA, 2022)

Overview of Pennsylvania School Counselor Workforce

LEA Type / Description	# of School Counselors*		
	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
School District	4225	4235	4323
Charter School	339	347	394
Intermediate Unit	153	151	151
Career and Technical Center	108	104	108
State Juvenile Correction Institution	4	4	4
Total	4829	4841	4980

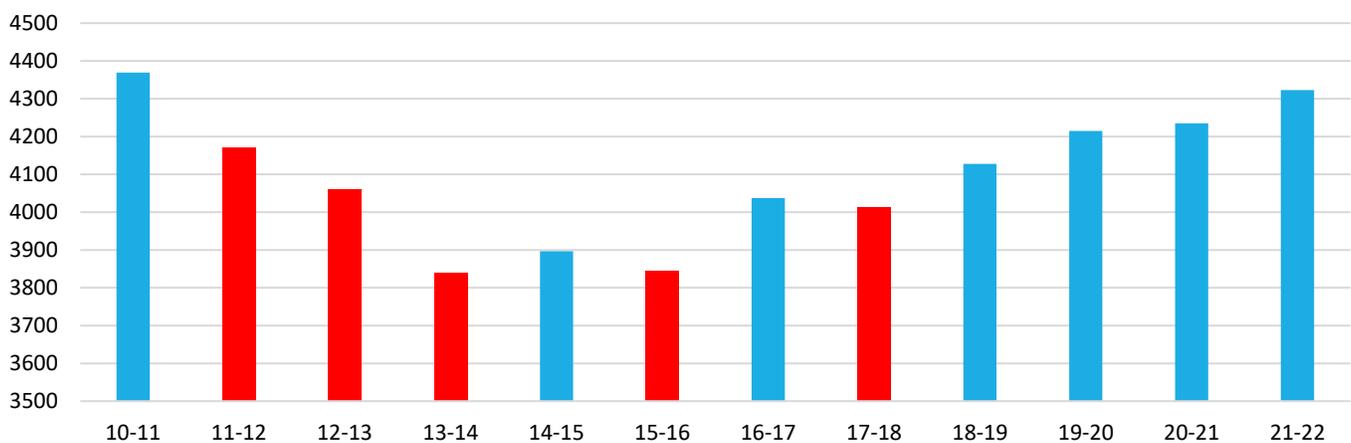
Each year, the PA Department of Education releases the Professional Personnel ID Report listing out every public educator, and each assignment they had during the previous school year. Because each educator can have multiple assignments, the number of school counselors was determined by tabulating the listed Full-Time Equivalency (FTE) together for each individual educator.

In the majority of cases, each school counselor had a total assignment value of 1, though each individual school counselor may have been assigned to multiple buildings within an LEA. There were 95 school counselors that had less than 1 full position listed, and therefore it may appear, for example, that there are more school counselors practicing in public school districts than are actually in physical buildings.

*The numbers appearing throughout this report are focused on school counselor staffing in the 499 public “School Districts” throughout the Commonwealth.

Historic Overview of Pennsylvania School Counselor Workforce

Annual # of School Counselors in PA Public School Districts



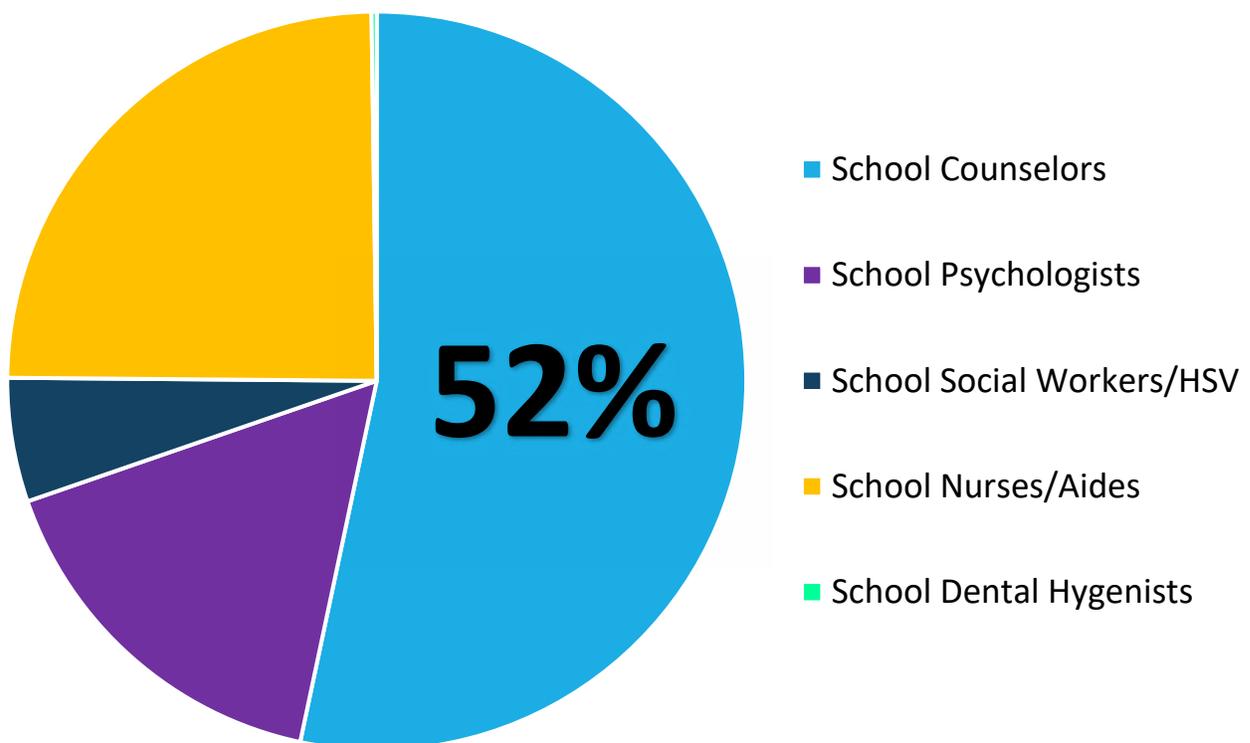
11 Year School Counselor Staffing Review	# of School Counselors*		
	Elementary	Secondary	Total
SY 2010-2011	1,660	2,709	4,369
SY 2021-2022	1,793	2,530	4,323
Change in School Counselor Staffing	+133	-179	-46

Since 2010,
there has been a net loss
of 46 school counselors
in Pennsylvania Public School Districts.

*Annual PDE Professional Personnel Individual Staffing Reports (2010-2022)

Overview of Pennsylvania School Counselor Workforce

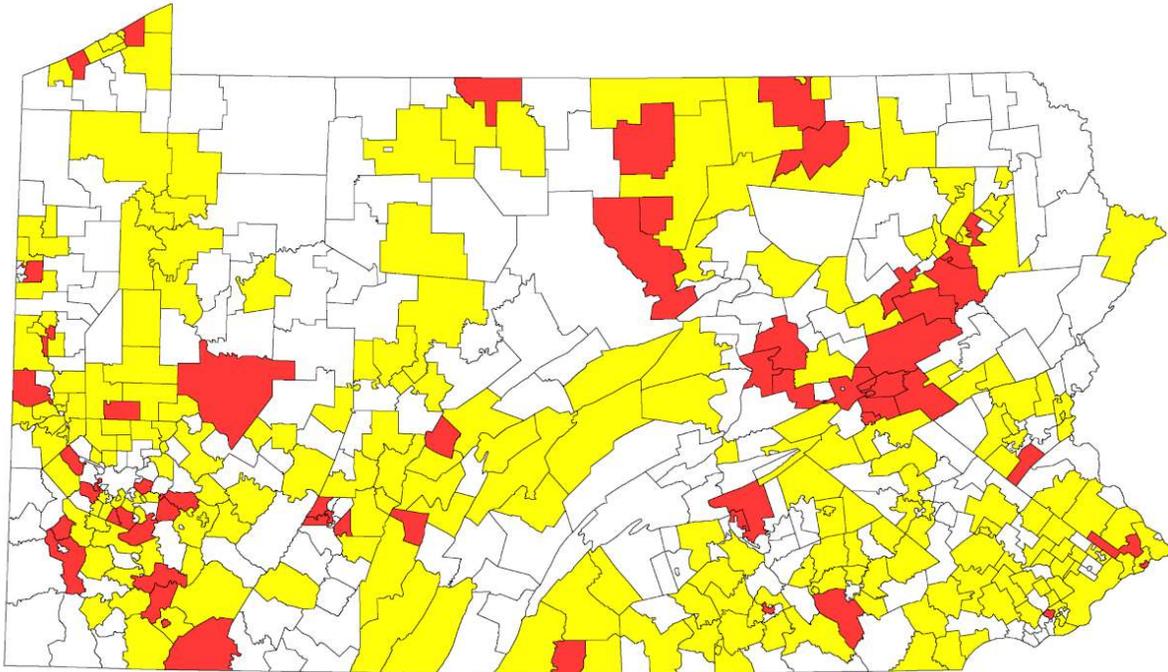
Student/Pupil Services Professionals (SY 21-22)



Totaling 52%,
school counselors are the **largest group**
of all Student/Pupil Services professionals
across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Reasonable Student to School Counselor Ratios

A Statewide Snapshot



1:353

Median Student to School Counselor Ratio
in PA Public School District Buildings

50% of PA Public School Districts
have average building ratios of **1:350 or higher**

1 in 10 PA Public School Districts
have average building ratios of **1:500 or higher**

Overview of Pennsylvania School Counselor Ratios by Building

School Counselor Ratios	# of Public School Buildings
No School Counselor Listed	192
550 or Higher	334
450 to 550	340
350 to 450	593
250 to 350	758
250 or Less	461
Total	2,677

Less than 20% of Pennsylvania public school buildings meet the nationally recommended 250 students to 1 school counselor ratio.

20% of Pennsylvania public school buildings have ratios of 550 students to 1 school counselor, or have no school counselor at all.

Elementary school buildings (various grade configurations including K-6) are most likely to have higher student to school counselor ratios than any other building type.

Overview of Pennsylvania School Counselor Ratios by Grade Configuration

School Counselor Ratios	# of Public School Buildings by Grade Configuration						
	Total	K-6	K-8	6-8	9-12	5-12	K-12
No School Counselor Listed	192	135	14	15	15	6	6
550 or Higher	334	262	30	28	12	1	1
450 to 550	340	269	17	26	21	7	0
350 to 450	593	375	32	105	49	32	0
250 to 350	758	288	34	180	187	67	2
250 or Less	461	136	26	99	152	46	2
Total	2,677	1,465	153	453	436	159	11

Less than 20% of Pennsylvania public school buildings meet the nationally recommended 250 students to 1 school counselor ratio.

20% of Pennsylvania public school buildings have ratios of 550 students to 1 school counselor, or have no school counselor at all.

Elementary school buildings (various grade configurations including K-6) are most likely to have higher student to school counselor ratios than any other building type.

Overview of Pennsylvania School Counselor Ratios by Grade Configuration

Building Level Configuration	# of Buildings	Average Ratio	Median Ratio	No SC Listed
Elementary (K-6)	1,464	1 : 444	1 : 412	135
Middle (6-8)	453	1 : 337	1 : 312	15
High (9-12)	436	1 : 297	1 : 271	15
Total	2,353	-	-	165

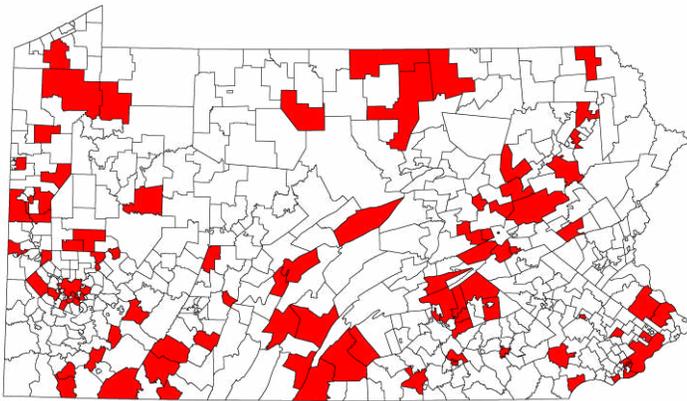
88% of Pennsylvania’s school buildings are configured by standard grade level (Elementary, Middle, High). Note that elementary school buildings may be primary schools (K-2), intermediate schools (3-5), elementary schools (K-5 or K-6), or another variation of the K-6 grade band.

Building Level Configuration	# of Buildings	Average Ratio	Median Ratio	No SC Listed
ELE + MS (K-8)	153	1 : 479	1 : 362	14
MS + HS (5-12, 6-12, 7-12)	160	1 : 299	1 : 288	6
ELE + MS +HS (K-12)*	11	-	-	11
Total	324	-	-	31

12% of Pennsylvania’s school buildings are configured with multiple levels within one building (for example, Junior/Senior High Schools, “Elementary” and “Secondary”). School counselors working in these buildings may then be responsible for students ranging from 5 years old up to 18 years old, which increases demand on their ability to address all levels of student development efficiently.

*Most of these K-12 “buildings” are special programs within school districts, such as cyber academies

School Counselor Ratios: A Snapshot of Inequity



Districts with Buildings
with No School Counselors Assigned

School Counselor Ratios	# of Public School Buildings	
	Total	Title I
No School Counselor Listed	192	76%
550 or Higher	334	74%
450 to 550	340	68%
350 to 450	593	60%
250 to 350	758	45%
250 or Less	461	46%

School buildings serving communities with higher levels of need have fewer school counselors available for those students.

School Counselor Ratios: A Snapshot of Inequity

Total Public-School Buildings	No School Counselors Assigned	At Least a Fraction of a School Counselor Assigned	All Buildings Combined
Number of Buildings	192	2,485	2,677
% Title I	76%	56%	57%
Average % of Student Enrollment (not White)	45%	32%	33%
Average % of Student Enrollment Economically Disadvantaged	56%	45%	46%

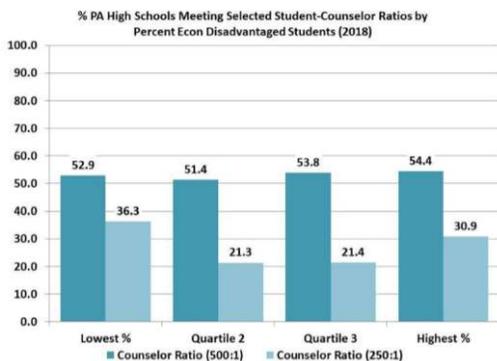
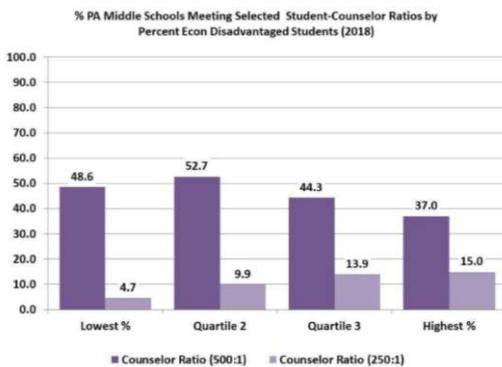
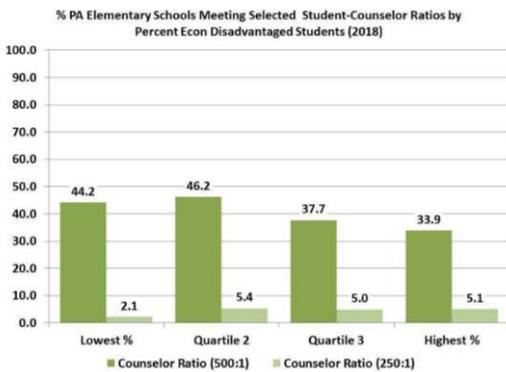
In comparison to schools with even a fraction of a school counselor assigned...

...school buildings without any school counselors assigned are:

- more likely to be a Title I school
- serve students from minority backgrounds
- serve students who come from economically disadvantaged homes

School Counselor Ratios: A Snapshot of Inequity

Research from Dr. Edward Fuller, Associate Professor and the Director for the Penn State Center for Evaluation and Education Policy Analysis (PCEEPA) shows that schools serving student populations with higher levels of poverty are likely to have higher student to school counselor ratios.

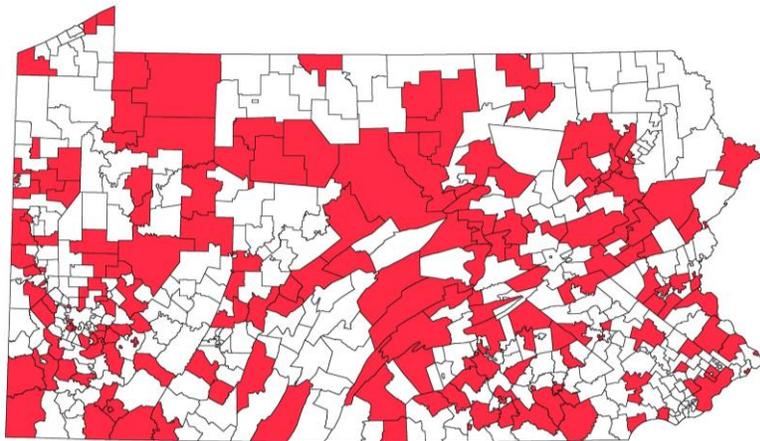


Total Public-School Buildings	Title I Schools	Non-Title I Schools	All Buildings Combined
Number of Buildings	1,537	1,140	2,677
Average Ratio	1 : 422	1 : 356	1 : 393
Median Ratio	1 : 386	1 : 313	1 : 353
Average % of Student Enrollment Non-White	42%	21%	33%
Average % of Student Enrollment English Language Learner	5.6%	1.9%	4.1%

School counselors in Title I school buildings have significantly higher caseloads than school counselors in non-Title I school buildings, and these caseloads involve a higher proportion of students from diverse backgrounds.

Our most vulnerable students are the most likely students to not have access to school counselors.

School Counselors and Split Building Assignments



45%

225 school districts (45%) have buildings served by school counselors who are assigned to multiple buildings, impacting over a **quarter of a million students**, mostly **elementary school children**.

In practice, this means a school counselor might be assigned to two elementary schools, and only be physically present in each two or three days a week. This puts increased demand on the school counselor to be able to establish relationships not only with multiple groups of students, but multiple sets of staff, administration, parents, and communities.

In some cases, a school counselor may be called from one building to go to another in the event of a crisis, or a crisis may be handled by another school employee who may not have the same qualifications and training as a school counselor. The analogy of a fire sprinkler system demonstrates the risk in this – you want the sprinklers to be available and working every day, not just on days when there is a fire!

School Counselor Positions Needed for 250:1 Recommended Ratio

	19-20	20-21	21-22
School Counselors Needed for 250:1 Ratio	6,229	6,028	6,029
School Counselors Assigned to Buildings	4,195	4,207	4,296
Total School Counselors Needed	2,034	1,821	1,732

Pennsylvania students
only have 70% of the school counselor positions needed
 to meet staffing recommendations.

56%

of public school buildings need at least 0.5+ additional SC positions to achieve ASCA recommended ratio.

The majority of these buildings are elementary schools, which serve our youngest students.

Building Need Categories	# of Additional SC Needed
Buildings Needing at Least 0.5 – 0.99 Additional SC	759
Buildings Needing at Least 1.0-1.99 Additional SC	607
Buildings Needing at Least 2.0-2.99 Additional SC	110
Buildings Needing at Least 3.0+ Additional SC	26
Total Buildings	1,502

Reasonable Student to School Counselor Ratios

Recommended Staffing Price Point

\$130 MILLION

Number of School Buildings	2,677
Number of Students	1,507,186
School Counselors Needed for 250:1 Ratio	6,029
School Counselors Assigned to Buildings (SY 20-21)	4,296
Total School Counselors Needed	1,732
Median PA School Counselor Salary (SY 20-21)	\$74,950

It would take approximately **\$130 million** to hire the total school counseling positions needed in PA, which is **less than 1% of the total state appropriations for education** for the 21-22 school year.

This investment would impact each district differently based on their specific staffing needs and salary schedules as determined by local CBAs.

Reasonable Student to School Counselor Ratios

Recommended Staffing Price Point

\$300

Number of School Buildings (SD LEA)	2,677
Number of Students (SD LEA)	1,507,186
Total School Counselors Needed for 250:1 Ratio	6,029
Median PA School Counselor Salary (SY 21-22)	\$74,950
Total Annual Investment of Ideal School Counselor Staffing	\$452 million
Total Investment Per Student	\$300

If Pennsylvania committed to funding the complete school counselor staffing needs for an ideal student to school counselor ratio of 250 to 1, **it would be a \$300 investment per child per year.**

Reasonable Student to School Counselor Ratios

Recommended Staffing Price Point

\$86 MORE

	CURRENT	IDEAL
Number of School Buildings (SD LEA)	2,677	2,677
Number of Students (SD LEA)	1,507,186	1,507,186
Total School Counselors	4,296	6,029
Median PA School Counselor Salary (SY 21-22)	\$74,950	\$74,950
Total Annual Investment School Counselor Staffing	\$322 million	\$452 million
Total Investment Per Student	\$214	\$300

If Pennsylvania committed to funding the complete school counselor staffing needs for an ideal student to school counselor ratio of 250 to 1, **it would require \$86 more per child per year.**

Defined Use of School Counselor Time



The ASCA National Model, which outlines best practices for school counselors and school counseling programs, recommends that **80% of a school counselor's time be spent in direct services to students.**

While school counselors are willing team players in the overall functioning of a school system, these non-school counseling duties interrupt and detract from the professional service that they provide to students and families.

Pennsylvania does **not** currently have a defined scope of practice for school counselors. Unlike classroom teachers, who are hired to perform defined classroom duties, school counselors are often used as utility players in a school building – covering classes when teachers are absent and no subs are available, coordinating standardized testing, filling in on duty rotations, or serving as data and records clerks. They sometimes function as pseudo-administrators, tracking student attendance and administering discipline.

Providing a scope of practice would **help school counselors advocate for appropriate roles and responsibilities in their buildings** so that students and families get the services school counselors are uniquely qualified to provide.

Defined Use of School Counselor Time

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

The PA School Safety Task Force (2018) identified several key areas that require a multidisciplinary approach to prevention, intervention, and response – social isolation and bullying, comprehensive social and emotional education throughout a student’s K-12 education, and insufficient staffing levels for both physical and mental health services.

School counselors are trained to **address student social and emotional development, as well as mental health assessment and response.**



Top 5 PA Safe2Say Something Report Types (2019)
Bullying/Cyber Bullying
Cutting/Self-Harm
Suicide/Suicidal Ideation
Depression/Anxiety
Drug Use

Safe2Say Something is an anonymous reporting service for students to report unsafe or concerning activities in schools, implemented in 2019 by the PA Attorney General’s Office.

Students have primarily used this service to report concerns about their mental health.



STUDENT CAREER READINESS

“School counselors are a critical part of Pennsylvania’s vision to help all students translate their interests and aspirations into tangible college and career plans and choices.

However, **many school counselors are stretched thin, juggling several responsibilities and significant case loads, and are often isolated in their work.**”

-Pennsylvania State Consolidated Plan, Every Student Succeeds Act, 2019 (p.96)

School counselors are also a primary vehicle for **college and career advisement and planning.**

As these domains of student learning are now a part of the Future Ready PA Index, which is a public dashboard of school quality and performance, the need for school counselors to be able to focus their work has never been greater.

The School Counseling Services Act of 2021

HB 1825

Over the two years, Pennsylvania students have faced perhaps the greatest disruption ever to impact our school systems and communities. COVID-19 not only closed our school buildings in the spring of 2020, but continues to loom as an ever-present force in students' lives. It impacted how they received instruction, how and when they were able to see their friends, the employment of their families and neighbors, and the safety and stability of what school is supposed to be as they grow and develop, and they prepare to return to school again with ongoing uncertainty about how the school year will operate.

While many of our students have demonstrated resilience and perseverance through these unprecedented challenges, many others are struggling to cope with the increased strain on their mental, social, and emotional health.

- Throughout the pandemic, mental health problems have accounted for a growing proportion of children's visits to hospital emergency rooms throughout the pandemic (CDC, 2020)
- Mental and behavioral health concerns have been and continue to be the top referral categories through Pennsylvania's anonymous student reporting app Safe2Say Something (PA Department of the Attorney General, 2019; 2020)
- The rates of teenage suicide have been on the rise for the past decade (CDC, 2020), and in the last administration of the Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS), depressive symptoms were reported by students as one of the main risk factors they face, along with low attachment to their communities, and a low commitment to their schools – all factors that have steadily increased across all grade levels since 2015 (PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency, 2019).

Across the United States, school counseling services are generally guaranteed to students through one of two state practices – requiring school districts to outline comprehensive school counseling programs, or requiring a certain number of student to school counselor ratio in school buildings. Some states do both of these things.

Pennsylvania is the only state in America that does neither of these things.

The School Counseling Services Act of 2021

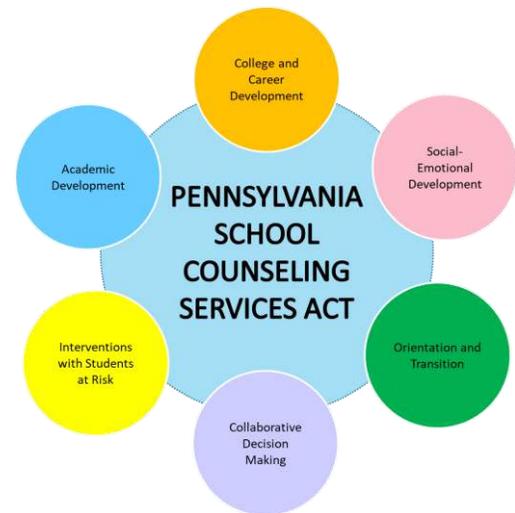
HB 1825

As the only state yet to act on school counseling services for our students, there is no better or more timely reform than guaranteeing all Pennsylvania students have access to clearly defined, comprehensive school counseling programs.

School counselors in Pennsylvania are often confronted with the reality that their role is not well understood by school leaders and the general population. They must not only provide services to students, but must simultaneously educate and advocate in their schools and communities about their roles and areas of expertise. This means that not all school counselors are able to work effectively and efficiently with their students, and the types of services provided can look vastly different from one school district to another all across Pennsylvania.

While school counselors have provided responsive services for students in crisis for many years, the need for proactive, preventative, and educational programming specific to mental health and social-emotional learning has been magnified by the disruptions brought to our schools by COVID-19.

The School Counseling Services Act will provide clarity for students and families as to the services they can expect to receive from their school counselors, to school districts who are seeking to support their students effectively through a global pandemic, and to taxpayers who can see their money fund efficient student support services that align with best practices, no matter their zip code or socioeconomic status.



A minimum of 80% of a school counselor's time should be spent in direct and indirect student services.

School counselors dedicate their time to service delivery for students, which is defined and understood by students, parents, and other staff.



Every district has a written, comprehensive school counseling program, delivered by certified school counselors.

**Introduced in the
PA House of Representatives
September 8, 2021
by
Representative
Dan Miller (D-42; Allegheny)
with 13 Cosponsors**

The School Counseling Services Act of 2021

HB 1825 Introduction Memo

“Increasing Student Success with More School Counselor Support”

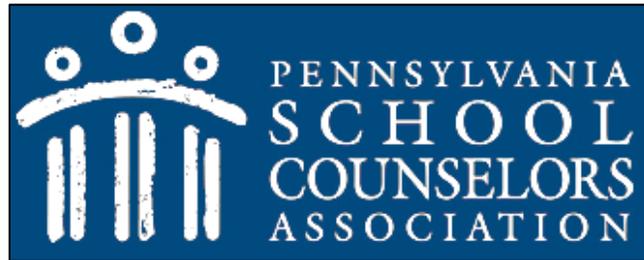
“Pennsylvania is the only state in the nation that does not require standardized school guidance counseling services in all schools. To make matters worse, as students were forced to pivot during COVID-19, their access to academic planning and career preparation opportunities suffered – all of which were exacerbated by pandemic-related anxiety and depression.

My legislation would create the School Counseling Services Act and require that schools develop a robust and comprehensive school counseling plan with the goals of improving the transition process following graduation, enhanced access to quality mental health supports, and strengthening relationships between guidance counselors and students.

Guidance counselors fill a tremendous role in students’ lives, often wearing multiple “hats” as they work to ensure students have the tools and resources to succeed beyond graduation, whether they pursue further education or the workforce. This effort would allow schools, parents, and the community to measure a school’s effectiveness in providing a holistic educational experience that seeks to meet the highly individualized needs of all students.

Please consider your support of this legislation to align Pennsylvania with the rest of the country to create nurturing and supportive learning environments for Pennsylvania’s next group of leaders.”

-Representative Dan Miller (D-42; Allegheny)



CALL TO ACTION SUMMARY

Define the Scope of Practice (80% Direct, 20% Indirect)

- School Counseling Services Act (HB 1825)
- School counselors often serve as test administrators, serve in duty roles, and perform “utility player” roles as needed in their buildings, as opposed to delivering school counseling services and content through a guaranteed and viable program
- Student social, emotional, and mental health are a priority and school counselors are uniquely trained to address these domains

Reasonable Student to School Counselor Ratios

- 1 in 10 school districts have ratios of 1:500 or higher
- 50% of PA school districts have average ratios of 1:350 or higher
- For \$300 per student each year, which is only \$86 more than is currently being spent, every student in PA could have access to a school counselor

A Certified School Counselor for Every Level

- Of the 192 school buildings with no school counselor, ~80% of these are elementary schools, and 76% are Title I schools

A Certified School Counselor for Every Building

- 45% of PA school districts have buildings served by school counselors who are assigned to multiple buildings
- Over a quarter million students have a school counselor who is assigned to multiple buildings
- In most cases, these are elementary school children
- Title 1 school buildings and buildings serving minority populations are less likely to have a school counselor and if they do, the ratios are higher

Methodology Used to Determine PA SC Ratios

PDE PA Professional Personnel ID Report (2021-2022)

- Filtered by Elementary and Secondary School Counselor assignment description
- Filtered by Public School District
- # of School Counselors Assigned Per Building calculated by adding the full-time equivalency (FTE) of each school counselor assigned to each building ($[FTE * 0.01] * 1$)

Future Ready PA Data Files (2021-2022)

- Building Enrollment
- “Ideal” staffing calculated by dividing each building’s enrollment by 250, in line with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommended ratio
- District and Building demographic information
- Title I designation

Needed Difference calculated by subtracting each building’s summed FTE # of School Counselors Assigned from the “Ideal” staffing

References

American School Counselor Association (2019). *The ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs*, fourth edition. Alexandria, VA: Author.

American School Counseling Association (2022). Student to school counselor ratio 2021-2022. <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/School-Counselor-Roles-Ratios>

American School Counseling Association (2020). The role of the school counselor. <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/ee8b2e1b-d021-4575-982c-c84402cb2cd2/Role-Statement.pdf>

CDC (2020). Mental Health–Related Emergency Department Visits Among Children Aged <18 Years During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, January 1–October 17, 2020

CDC (2020). State Suicide Rates Among Adolescents and Young Adults Aged 10–24: United States, 2000–2018

Department of the Attorney General (2019, 2020). Safe2Say Something Annual Reports

Goodman-Scott, E., Sink, C., Cholewa, B., Burgess, M. (2018). An ecological view of school counselor ratios and student academic outcomes: A national investigation. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 96(10), 388-398. doi: 10.1002/jcad.12221

Lapan, R. T., Gysbers, N. C., Bragg, S., & Pierce, M. E. (2012). Missouri professional school counselors: Ratios matter, especially in high-poverty schools. *Professional School Counseling*, 16 (2), 108-116. doi: 10.1177/2156759X0001600207

Parzych, J., Donohue, P., Gaesser, A., Chiu, M. (2019). Measuring the impact of school counselor ratios on student outcomes. ASCA Research Report. Retrieved from www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/Publications/Research-Release-Parzych.pdf

PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency (2019). 2019 PA Youth Survey (PAYS) Statewide Report Highlights

PA Department of Education, PA Professional Personnel ID Report (2021-2022)

PA Department of Education, PA Public School Enrollment Reports (2021-2022)

PA Department of Education, Future Ready PA Data Files (2021-2022)

PA Department of Education, State Consolidated Plan, Every Student Succeeds Act (2019)

Summary of PA State Education Appropriations (2021-2022)

PA School Safety Report (2018)

PA Safe2Say Something Annual Report (2019)

Dr. Edward J. Fuller, Associate Professor of Education at Penn State University, Director of the Penn State Center for Evaluation and Education Policy Analysis (PCEEPA), and Associate Director of Policy for the University Council for Educational Administration

For questions about the data laid out in this report,
please contact Adam Oldham at aoldham@paschoolcounselor.org

EXISTING PENNSYLVANIA FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL COUNSELING SERVICES

Pennsylvania is the ONLY state that does not have either a state plan for comprehensive school counseling services or mandated school counseling positions in schools. Despite this, there are existing systems that broadly define school counseling professionals and some of the services they provide to students and schools. In the absence of explicit definition and scope of practice, the way Pennsylvania schools utilize certified school counselors can look quite different from one place to another, even within the same school district.

EDUCATIONAL SPECIALIST (22 Pa. Code 49.1)

CERTIFICATION

Professional certified personnel whose primary responsibility is to render professional service other than classroom teaching, such as dental hygienist, home and school visitor, instructional technology specialist, social restoration specialist, nutrition service specialist, **elementary counselor, secondary counselor**, school nurse and school psychologist.

<p>A. The educational specialist understands the central concepts, structures and delivery styles of the professional area in which the educational specialist practices and can foster learning experiences for all students.</p> <p>B. The educational specialist understands how all children learn and develop, and can contribute to the provision of learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, career and personal development.</p> <p>C. The educational specialist understands how students differ in their ability and approaches to learning and creates opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.</p> <p>D. The educational specialist understands and uses a variety of professional strategies to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving and performance skills.</p> <p>E. The educational specialist uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning and self-motivation.</p>	<p>F. The educational specialist uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques supported by appropriate technology to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in and out of the classroom.</p> <p>G. The educational specialist plans professional services based upon knowledge of professional field, students, the community and curriculum goals.</p> <p>H. The educational specialist understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social and physical development of the learner.</p> <p>I. The educational specialist thinks systematically about practice, learns from experience, seeks the advice of others, draws upon educational research and scholarship and actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.</p> <p>J. The educational specialist contributes to school effectiveness by collaborating with other educators and parents, by using community resources, and by working as an advocate for change to improve opportunities for student learning.</p>
--	--

CERTIFICATION AND STAFFING POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

CERTIFICATION

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL COUNSELOR (PK-12) (CSPG 76)

The Pennsylvania Department of Education, in accordance with 22 Pa. Code § 49.13(b)(10), developed the Certification and Staffing Policies and Guidelines (CSPG) to provide guidance involving compliance with state laws governing certification and staffing practices in school entities within the Commonwealth. The CSPGs also provide clarification to educators regarding (1) the issuance of professional certificates, (2) the grade level and content scope of certificate subject areas and (3) the appropriate certificate for staffing professional positions in public schools. In the CSPGs, you will find valuable information related to certificate eligibility as well as the proper staffing practices that will help achieve educational excellence in the schools of the Commonwealth.

<p>An educator holding a valid Pennsylvania certificate for Elementary and Secondary School Counselor is responsible for the development of a comprehensive school counseling program.</p> <p>The certified School Counselor collaborates with others to meet student needs in three areas:</p>	ACADEMIC	CAREER-PLANNING	PERSONAL-SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interprets cognitive, aptitude and achievement tests Participates in special education individualized education programs (IEP's) Assists in the educational placement (transition) of departing students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works with career program planning, organization, implementation, administration, and evaluation Coordinates student work-release programs in which students meet specific academic and work experience requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducts classroom guidance activities Provides individual and group counseling related to academic or personal social development including peer mediation and bullying Provides intervention and prevention

Each school entity shall prepare a **written plan for the implementation of a comprehensive and integrated K-12 program of the student services** based on the needs of its students. Though the variety of student services offered will differ from school to school depending upon its size and the needs of its students, the following categories of services shall be provided by each school entity in planning its student services:

DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES	STUDENT SERVICES MUST:
Address student developmental needs throughout their enrollment in school. Developmental services include guidance counseling , psychological services, health services, home and school visitor services and social work services that support students in addressing their academic, behavioral, health, personal and social development issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be an integral part of the instructional program at all levels of the school system. • Provide information to students and parents or guardians about educational opportunities of the school's instructional program and how to access these opportunities. • Provide career information and assessments so that students and parents or guardians might become aware of the world of work and of a variety of career options available to individual students. • Provide basic health services outlined in Article XIV of the Public School Code of 1949 (24 P.S. § § 14-1401—14-1423) for students and information to parents or guardians about the health needs of their children. • Persons delivering student services shall be specifically licensed or certified as required by statute or regulation. • The Department of Education will provide guidelines and technical assistance to local education agencies in planning student services.
DIAGNOSTIC, INTERVENTION, AND REFERRAL SERVICES	
Address students who are experiencing problems attaining educational achievement appropriate to their learning potential. Student services staff use diagnostic services to identify barriers that limit a student's success in school. Intervention services actively engage student services staff in activities planned to reduce or eliminate specific barriers to student success. Student services staff may arrange for referrals to other school-based or school-linked professionals or may refer parents and guardians to appropriate community-based services for assistance.	
CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION SERVICES	
Consultation services are used by student services staff, in partnership with parents or guardians, to obtain assistance to address barriers and issues that are outside the scope of the student services professional. Consultation and coordination services may be used to assist in the diagnosis, intervention or referral of students who face barriers to success. Coordination services connect school resources with other available resources to assist students in meeting their educational objectives.	

DEFINITIONS (22 Pa. Code 12.16)	STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (22 Pa. Code 12.42)
<p><i>Student services</i>—Services designed by a school entity to support the instructional program and to help students attain their educational and career goals.</p> <p>(i) Services may include school guidance counseling, health services (under Article XIV of the Public School Code of 1949 (24 P. S. § § 14-1401—14-1423) and 28 Pa. Code Chapter 23 (relating to school health)), psychological services, social work and home and school visitor services.</p> <p>(ii) School entities may supplement, but may not supplant, these services through school-based, school-linked, or coordinated services provided by locally available social and human services agencies.</p>	<p>The Commonwealth's student assistance program is designed to assist school personnel to identify issues, including alcohol, drugs and others, which pose a barrier to a student's learning and school success. Student assistance is not a treatment program; rather, it is a systematic process using effective and accountable professional techniques to mobilize school resources to remove the barriers to learning, and, where the problem is beyond the scope of the school, to assist the parent and the student with information so they may access services within the community. The student assistance team members do not diagnose, treat or refer for treatment; but they may refer for an assessment for treatment.</p>

There shall be a written plan on file, approved by the local board of school directors, for the development and implementation of a **comprehensive, sequential program of guidance services** for kindergarten through 12th grade.

The plan must include procedures to provide for guidance services to AVTs.

<p>1. Assistance to students in selecting vocational curricula that meet their needs and address their interests.</p> <p>School entity counseling services must ensure that counselors do not direct or urge any student to enroll in a particular career or program, or measure or predict a student's prospects for success in any career or program based upon the student's race, color, national origin, sex or disabilities. School entities cannot counsel students with disabilities toward more restrictive career objectives than students without disabilities and with similar abilities and interests.</p> <p>2. Assistance for all vocational students in making educational career plans including high school academic and technical preparation and postsecondary education and training, and adjustments through the use of individual and group counseling and appropriate student assessment procedures.</p> <p>3. Provision of occupational and educational information needed for realistic career planning in an organized, systematic fashion for students, parents and teachers.</p>	<p>4. Maintenance of cumulative records and the use, exchange and release of student information in accordance with § § 12.31 and 12.32 (relating to general requirements; and elements of the plan).</p> <p>5. Adequate orientation procedures for vocationally oriented pupils.</p> <p>6. Support of a placement service that is developmental and makes provisions for the transition from school to the world of work.</p> <p>7. Formal and informal consultation with teachers, administrators and other school staff.</p> <p>8. A school-initiated system of parental involvement.</p> <p>9. Liaison activities with community agencies.</p> <p>10. Assistance in the conduct of follow-up studies to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum.</p>
---	--

School Counselors for All Students

Pennsylvania is the **only state in America** that does not presently require defined school counseling programs or school counselors in our schools. In the absence of explicit definition and scope of practice, the way Pennsylvania schools utilize certified school counselors can look quite different from one place to another, even within the same school district.

While there are almost 5,000 school counselors currently working in Pennsylvania, too many students, schools, and communities do not have reasonable access to a school counselor. While many schools need more school counselors, there are also schools who are not utilizing existing school counselors appropriately, resulting in less effective and efficient services. Pennsylvania must act to ensure school counselors can deliver the services students need now more than ever.

DEFINE THE SCOPE OF PRACTICE

SERVICES

PASS THE PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL COUNSELING SERVICES ACT

- CLEAR EXPECTATIONS OF SERVICE
- DEFINED USE OF TIME
- MAXIMIZING EXISTING RESOURCES
- ACCOUNTABILITY AND PROGRAM SUPPORT



INCREASE STUDENT ACCESS TO SCHOOL COUNSELORS

STAFFING

REASONABLE STUDENT TO SCHOOL COUNSELOR RATIOS

CERTIFIED SCHOOL COUNSELORS AT EVERY LEVEL

CERTIFIED SCHOOL COUNSELORS AT EVERY BUILDING

Comparing Student Services Professionals

Schools in Pennsylvania have historically utilized three different types of student services professionals to support student mental health and success. School counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers each function in similar and yet distinct roles dealing with student mental health, academic achievement, and human development. The differences are primarily in scope of reach – school counselors service all students, while school psychologists and school social workers service students identified as in need of or potentially in need of higher levels of intervention.

Deliver comprehensive school counseling services that address and support all students' developmental needs and growth.

- Standards-Aligned Classroom Instruction
- Individual Student Planning
- Responsive Services
 - Individual and Group Counseling
 - Crisis Response
- Referral Services



Evaluate and assess student concerns with individual academic achievement and behavioral health.

- Assessments and Identification
- Individualized Education Planning (IEPs)
- Crisis Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention
- School-Wide Positive Behavior Support

Support students and families in need of basic resources, direct interventions, and case management services, providing a bridge between the school and a student's home/family environment.

- Case Management
- Coordination of Care
- Direct Therapeutic Services and Interventions for Students Demonstrating High Levels of Need

