

REGULATION

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: IJA

Responsible Office: Special Education and Student Services

School Counseling Programs and Services

I. PURPOSE

- A. To ensure that a high quality school counseling program that is comprehensive, developmentally appropriate, and reflects the diversity of Montgomery County is provided equitably to all students in all Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)
- B. To align MCPS School Counseling Services with national and state standards in school counseling

II. BACKGROUND

A growing body of research suggests that social and emotional learning delivered through a comprehensive, developmentally appropriate school counseling program has a positive impact on student academic performance. School counseling is integral to the mission of schools and to the total educational program. School counseling programs remove barriers to learning and promote the knowledge and skills necessary for the academic achievement and personal growth of all students through prevention and intervention services.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. *Academic Advocacy* is the process of reviewing the range of academic opportunities available and advocating for both the development of needed options and the placement of students in appropriate and rigorous programs with necessary supports. Particular attention is given to support students and their parents in identifying and applying for rigorous program options. Students traditionally underserved in these programs will be identified for specific advocacy and support.
- B. *Accountability System* is the process through which data is utilized for program design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement.
- C. *Articulation* is the transition of students from one grade to another or from one school to another, and the sharing of relevant information about students, including but not limited to academic information, between educational professionals.

- D. *Counseling* is a helping relationship implemented in individual or group settings by certified professional school counselors utilizing a variety of techniques and strategies that help students explore issues related to academic achievement and/or personal growth. Informal counseling may take place with other school staff throughout the school day.
- E. *Credentialed school counselor* is a school counselor who is issued certification by the State of Maryland upon completion of specific academic and training requirements.
- F. *Crisis preparedness* is planning for the provision of mental health supports during or after a crisis.
- G. *Data* are information about student demographics, academic performance, student participation, and other variables.
- H. *Delivery System* is the structure through which the counseling program is organized and implemented.
- I. *Foundation* is the vision, mission, and goals upon which the school counseling program is based.
- J. *Guidance* is planned, developmentally appropriate instructional or informational, group or classroom activities designed to help students focus on a particular issue or topic.
- K. *Individual Planning* is support for effective student decision making about academic program, educational choices, and career opportunities.
- L. *Intervention services* are counseling activities provided in response to student needs in the domains of academic, career development, health, interpersonal, and personal.
- M. *Management System* is the allocating and managing of resources to support the goals and needs of the school counseling program.
- N. *MCPS Comprehensive School Counseling Program* is a research based, standards based, K-12 counseling program aligned with the MCPS academic mission that enables students to acquire skills and knowledge in academic, career, health, interpersonal, and personal development domains through age-appropriate activities.

- O. *Prevention services* are proactive counseling activities designed to build student competence in the domains of academic, career, health, interpersonal, and personal development.
- P. *Program Standards* are descriptions of essential counseling program components at each school level.
- Q. *Responsive Counseling Services* are individual or group counseling activities that address specific students' needs identified by the counselor, student, other school staff, or parent for counseling, consultation, crisis support, or referrals to community agencies.
- R. *School Program Support* is any counseling program activity that assists the effective implementation of the overall school program, such as articulation and orientation of students, staff development, school climate programs, and other services which support the mission of the school.

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. The MCPS Comprehensive School Counseling Program provides schools counseling services for all students, identifies and seeks out students who need support, and collaborates with other MCPS offices and community agencies as necessary. The program is implemented in accordance with MCPS School Counseling Program Standards for each school level that delineates essential program components: Foundation, Delivery System, Management System, and Accountability System.

At each school:

- 1. Foundation:
 - a. The school counseling program aligns with the vision and mission of MCPS, the mission of the school, and the School Improvement Plan.
 - b. Program goals that address the academic success and personal growth of all students are developed using data from a variety of sources. Access to counseling services for students typically underserved will be a priority.
 - c. The school counseling program is implemented by credentialed school counselors.

2. Delivery System:

- a. The school counseling program delivers prevention and intervention services that support the academic, career, health, interpersonal, and personal development of all students.
- b. Prevention and intervention services include, but are not limited to, classroom/group guidance, individual planning, responsive counseling, school program support, and crisis response.
- c. School counselors collaborate with school staff to implement a systematic articulation plan.
- d. Students and parents will be informed yearly about school counseling services.
- e. At all school levels, the school counselors will provide annual parental notification of services that the student may access. Parents/guardians will be notified about ongoing prevention and responsive counseling services that may be offered to students.
- f. At the elementary level, parents/guardians will be notified in writing about specific on-going prevention and responsive counseling services which will be provided to their child.
- g. Students may participate in on-going responsive counseling services unless parents/guardians explicitly withdraw implied consent. Not responding to notification about on-going responsive counseling services will be interpreted as consent for service.
- h. Student confidentiality is maintained in accordance with MCPS policies, Maryland State Department of Education guidelines, and national standards for professional ethics. However, school counselors have a duty to warn parents/guardians and other appropriate persons when they have a concern about a student's risk of harm to self or others.
- i. In crisis situations, such as suspected child abuse/neglect, suicide risk, and homelessness, all MCPS policies, procedures, and guidelines are followed.

- j. School counselors develop a plan to provide the diverse student population access to developmentally and culturally appropriate school counseling services. They identify and seek out students who need support, and collaborate with other MCPS offices and community agencies as necessary.
 - k. School counselors provide families with necessary information for supporting sound educational decision making.
3. Management System:
- a. The primary responsibility of the school counselor is to implement the MCPS Comprehensive School Counseling Program.
 - b. A plan exists for the systematic and collaborative implementation of the MCPS Comprehensive School Counseling Program.
 - c. A plan exists for regularly gathering input from and communicating with school counseling program stakeholders such as students, parents/guardians, staff, administrators, and community members about the goals, services, activities, and procedures integral to the MCPS Comprehensive School Counseling Program.
4. Accountability System:
- a. A plan is in place for utilizing data for program design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement.
 - b. School counselors are evaluated regularly according to the standards and procedures of MCPS.
 - c. Program information, including data, is shared with appropriate stakeholders and the MCPS School Counseling Services Unit.
- B. School counseling programs support the unique developmental and academic needs of individual students at each school level. School counselors collaborate with the school staff, administration, and parent community to ensure the integration and alignment of the school counseling program with the academic mission of the school.

1. At the elementary school level, school counselors:
 - a. Implement the MCPS Comprehensive School Counseling Program, including the following prevention and intervention services:
 - (1) Academic advocacy
 - (2) Classroom guidance lessons
 - (3) Responsive counseling
 - (4) Individual student planning
 - (5) Staff and parent consultation
 - (6) School-wide support
 - b. Implement regularly scheduled classroom guidance lessons in the five areas of academic, career, health, interpersonal, and personal development as the primary prevention component
 - c. Design, implement, and manage a referral system that affords all students equitable access to a range of counseling services
 - d. Collect and analyze school counseling program data to monitor, evaluate, and continuously improve the effectiveness of the school counseling program
 - e. Collaborate with school staff to implement a systematic plan to address the articulation and class assignment process and student transition needs
 - f. Collaborate with elementary and middle school staff to support students in their selection of a rigorous and appropriate academic program. Students traditionally underserved in rigorous programs will be specifically identified for recruitment and support.
2. At the middle school level, school counselors:
 - a. Implement the MCPS Comprehensive School Counseling Program, including the following prevention and intervention services:

- (1) Academic advocacy
 - (2) Classroom guidance lessons
 - (3) Responsive counseling
 - (4) Individual student planning
 - (5) Staff and parent consultation
 - (6) School-wide support
- b. Collaborate with school staff to develop and implement an articulation process to facilitate the transition of students from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school
 - c. Assist students with the development, review, and revision of rigorous and appropriate academic plans to support high school, career, and post-secondary planning. Students traditionally underrepresented in rigorous programs will be specifically identified for recruitment and support
 - d. Implement regularly scheduled classroom guidance lessons focusing on the five domain areas of academic, career, health, interpersonal, and personal development, and provide academic advising as the primary prevention component
 - e. Design, implement, and monitor a referral system that ensures equitable access to counseling services and programs
 - f. Design, implement, and monitor a process for disseminating information equitably about opportunities and supports available to students for a rigorous academic education
 - g. Collect and analyze school counseling program data to monitor, evaluate, and continuously improve the school counseling program to maximize effectiveness
3. At the high school level, school counselors:
 - a. Implement the MCPS Comprehensive School Counseling Program, including the following prevention and intervention services:

- (1) Academic advocacy
 - (2) Classroom guidance lessons
 - (3) Responsive counseling
 - (4) Individual student planning
 - (5) Staff and parent consultation
 - (6) School-wide support
- b. Design and implement school counseling programs and services to support the articulation needs of students transitioning from middle school to high school and from high school to college, career, and a variety of post-secondary options. Access to counseling services for students typically underserved will be a priority.
- c. Assist students with the design, review, and revision of rigorous and appropriate academic plans that reflect student post-secondary goals and facilitate their achievement. Students traditionally underserved in rigorous programs will be specifically identified for recruitment and support. Access to counseling services for students typically underserved will be a priority.
- d. A balanced representation of post-secondary school options, particularly institutions that historically attract diverse populations, will be presented. In addition, information regarding job training opportunities and programs will be shared.
- e. Provide academic advising and implement regularly scheduled classroom guidance lessons focusing on the five domain areas of academic, career, health, interpersonal, and personal development as the primary prevention component
- f. Design, implement, and manage a referral system that affords all students equitable access to school counselors and to an appropriate range of counseling programs and services

- g. Design, implement, and monitor a process for disseminating information equitably about opportunities and supports available to students for a rigorous academic education
- h. Collect and analyze academic school counseling program data to monitor, evaluate, and continuously improve the effectiveness of the school counseling program

C. Central Office Responsibilities

The School Counseling Services Unit provides leadership in academic advocacy to promote the academic success and personal growth of all students, with a particular focus on leading systemwide counselor efforts to recruit and support students traditionally underserved in academically rigorous programs.

1. To oversee the consistent design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement of the MCPS Comprehensive School Counseling Program at all schools, the School Counseling Services Unit:
 - a. Reviews counseling program and school system data regularly to facilitate data-driven decision making
 - b. Aligns the Comprehensive School Counseling Program with goals and mission of MCPS
 - c. Identifies areas of need and provides resources and ongoing professional development to school counselors and related school staff
2. The School Counseling Services Unit consults and collaborates with MCPS school counselors and related support staff, administrators, and other MCPS offices to:
 - a. Facilitate the integration of the Comprehensive School Counseling Program into each school
 - b. Create partnerships with stakeholders, community agencies, and universities concerning issues such as crisis response, child abuse and neglect, violence prevention, and counseling support for diverse populations

- c. Increase awareness about the role of school counseling in student success and how to access counseling services
- d. Disseminate information about resources, rigorous program options, and other opportunities available to students

Regulation History: Formerly Regulation 335-7, November 25, 1981; revised November 8, 2005.