

THE CALIFORNIA STANDARDS

FOR THE SCHOOL COUNSELING PROFESSION



www.schoolcounselor-ca.org

California Association of School Counselors
2023

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Preface

The 2023 edition of the California Standards for the School Counseling Profession (Standards) is presented with pride by the board of directors of the California Association of School Counselors, in collaboration with a committed team of professionals who devoted the past year to in-depth discussions and analysis, culminating in the creation of these standards.

The Standards provide an opportunity to expand upon the recent advancements made in school counseling. They are grounded in changes in policy, legislation, research, and the evolving role of school counselors across the Golden State. They support the paradigm that places emphasis on students through the lens of cultural sensitivity, equity, and accessibility. Their practices are evidence-based, data-driven, and culturally responsive, offering a continuum of services from prevention to extensive intervention. When school counselors adhere to the principles and criteria represented in these Standards, studies show that students experience greater overall success in their academic, career, and personal journeys.

The Standards were developed to coincide with notable advancements in the field. These advancements include the expansion of the school counselor workforce with over 14,000 currently working in California schools. This number has doubled since the last professional standards were published in 2009. While the California counselor-to-student ratios vary across schools, the statewide average stands at slightly over 1:500. Significant strides have been achieved with a 1:500 counselor-to-student ratio, but it still surpasses the national standards twofold. Therefore, in 2022 Governor Newsom unveiled an ambitious 10-point plan aimed at enhancing student mental health, which includes a heightened commitment to increasing the number of school counselors.

Several changes in California's legislative landscape have paved the way for the establishment of these Standards. In 2019 the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) updated the Pupil Personnel Service (PPS) Credential Standards.

In 2022 a significant milestone unfolded, marked by the passage of CASC-sponsored Assembly Bill (AB) 2508. This pivotal legislation revised the California Education Code (CEC 49600) – Educational Counseling. AB 2508 also gave way to a groundbreaking provision, granting school counselors authorization to deliver Medi-Cal LEA BOP reimbursable services.

Likewise, the recent publication of several documents reflects the evolving role of school counselors. “Best Practice: Guidelines for California School Counselors” laid the groundwork in 2019, followed by “Fostering the Whole Child: A Guide to School-Based Mental Health Professionals” in 2020.

These Standards were written with the keen awareness that educational inequalities disproportionately affect students from historically marginalized backgrounds, such as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), and those with lower socioeconomic statuses. These students are consistently overrepresented in discipline statistics and tend to exhibit significantly lower graduation rates, as documented by the U.S. Department of Education in 2021 and 2023, as well as the National Center for Education Statistics in 2019. Additionally, other marginalized and historically underserved groups such as LGBTQI+, English Learners, students with special needs, youth in foster care, and youth experiencing homelessness require consistent advocacy. The Standards are intended to recognize these historical inequities when referencing “all” students.

Finally, the Standards embody the collective wisdom of industry specialists from across California. This cadre of professionals evaluated evidence-based methodologies and best practices with the overarching goal of crafting a blueprint to address the multifaceted needs of students while aligning with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model.

Some may consider these Standards inspirational. Others may consider their functionality for crafting job descriptions and see them as a tool for conducting performance assessments. We wholeheartedly anticipate that most of us will both recognize the inspiration that comes from these Standards and view them as a practical step in better defining the role of school counselors statewide. Thank you for your dedication to California students and for your commitment to excellence in the field of school counseling.

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"Embracing the California Standards for the School Counseling Profession is a pivotal moment in shaping the destiny of our students and the profession itself."

- Dr. Loretta Whitson, executive director
California Association of School Counselors

Introduction

The California Standards for the School Counseling Profession (Standards) have been designed with a strong emphasis on equity and accessibility, aiming to reach students and their families where they are and to foster an environment where students flourish through the strategies and actions implemented by their school counselors. They are rooted in research and best practices and are supported by policy and California law. They serve as a comprehensive framework, encapsulating the diverse range of responsibilities undertaken by school counselors working at all grade levels.

With an unwavering commitment to student-centered methodologies, the Standards detail the essential components of effective school counseling. They proactively incorporate measures aimed at enriching student success in school and ensuring equitable practices across all service areas. Crafted to equip school counselors with a strategic road map, these Standards enable school counselors to navigate the complexities of educational counseling and the perpetually evolving conditions that are occurring in society. These Standards are also designed to provide guidance for school district administrators in the development of performance evaluations, job descriptions and to define the practices of school counselors, as a delivery system that is strategically designed to operate within a comprehensive, data-driven school counseling program. In essence, the 2023 revisions of the California Standards for the School Counseling Profession signify a resolute dedication to defining the practices of school counselors, ultimately creating a more promising future for the students of California.

Implied within the Standards are the fundamental aspects of ethical and professional integrity. They promote equity and cultural responsiveness. They encourage school counselors to be tenacious change agents and advocates who are creative, inspirational, and willing to weather uncertainties and to make their schools places where students thrive.

Rethinking Standards for California School Counselors: Navigating Evolving Challenges and Emerging Roles

These Standards have been developed in response to substantial changes in California's education system, evolving student needs, and shifting societal norms. The California Association of School Counselors first published the initial edition of the Standards back in 2009, marking a significant milestone in shaping the policies and practices governing school counselors in California. This move aimed to establish clear benchmarks for the work of school counselors, allowing for measurable outcomes. Reflecting on 2009, professionals in the field of California school counseling expressed deep concerns that the state had not invested adequately in its school counseling workforce compared to other states.

The average ratios in California during the early part of the 21st Century until 2010 ranged from 810 to 1,016 students per school counselor. Even after the landmark passage of Assembly Bill 1802, California Budget Trailer Bill (2006), which provided funding to expand the school counseling workforce by 2,500 counselors, California still ranked toward the bottom as compared to other states, heralding a pressing need for new laws, and innovative approaches to ensuring school counselors were not dispensable as in years past. Remnant from the 2006 gubernatorial race was the lack of school counselors with both Democrats and Republicans calling for an increase in the number of school counselors in California schools. This sentiment among California lawmakers remains present today.

Educational Counseling in California

CASC - Champions for the Profession of School Counseling:

Improving Education Counseling has been a long and steady effort embraced by the California Association of School Counselors Inc. (CASC). CASC is a nonprofit membership association established in 2000 and has, since its inception, been a steadfast advocate for bolstering the California school counseling profession utilizing a multifaceted approach. This organization is committed to empowering the school counseling workforce by means of strategic political engagement, facilitating comprehensive professional development, championing research endeavors, and establishing clear-cut professional benchmarks. CASC's efforts to improve school counseling programs and increase the school counseling workforce can be seen prominently in their legislative efforts. In revising the Standards, CASC sought out talented professionals from throughout the state to carry this complex project forward. The call by the Governor, and legislative body for stronger mental health support in schools, was the impetus behind the changes in responsibilities of school counselors.

The Path to Becoming a California School Counselor:

Accreditation standards at universities are primarily focused on ensuring the quality of higher education institutions and their programs. On the other hand, professional standards are tailored to specific occupations, guiding the conduct and proficiency of individuals within those domains. Both types of standards play vital roles in upholding educational and professional excellence, yet they serve distinct functions and scopes.

To become a school counselor in California, candidates must commit approximately three years to complete coursework and gain field experience. Aspiring school counselors are required to successfully finish a master's level program at an accredited university, which must be approved by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) and aligned with California's Pupil Personnel Service standards, with a specialization in school counseling. Most candidates typically enroll in programs comprising 48 to 60 semester units. In addition to coursework, candidates are mandated to fulfill a minimum of eight hundred (800) hours of supervised field experience. These requirements are designed to ensure that aspiring school counselors receive comprehensive training and practical experience to excel in their profession. The most recent changes in the accreditation standards occurred in 2020.

Maximizing School Counselor Roles and Responsibilities:

Not only have there been efforts to increase the number of school counselors working in California schools; there has also been a simultaneous nationwide movement rooted in empirical research to cast light on a pressing issue: the underutilization of school counselors by educational administrators. A systemic issue over the years has been the assigning of school counselors to provide services that are not aligned with standards and agreed-upon professional practices and are often characterized as administrative and unrelated to their core responsibilities. Consequently, these Standards are designed to serve as a roadmap to maximizing school counselors' duties and as a guide for school administrators in their oversight responsibilities.

Shifting Roles and Responsibilities:

The profession of school counseling has evolved within a growing societal awareness of school counselors' influence on student achievement in school today. Student needs are greater, and consequently, school counselors have been asked to do more. This expanded scope of service requires an updated set of standards that aptly capture the diverse responsibilities associated with school counseling. School counseling standards are meant to be broad and touch every aspect of the work probable within all school levels. Proficient school counselors must have a strong working knowledge not only of pedagogy and academic advising but also of mental and behavioral health, social and emotional wellness, along with an understanding of the intricate college and career landscape. With a repertoire of skills, school counselors engage in comprehensive programs that are designed via a review of overall student needs as determined by a data analysis process. Furthermore, the capacity of school counselors to prioritize continuous growth in their professional knowledge and expertise is pivotal to their success throughout their career.

Legal and Legislative Implications:

The updated standards hold substantial legal and legislative ramifications, reflecting recent shifts in California's educational environment.

Passage of Assembly Bill 2508: Recent changes in California law, most notably the passage of AB 2508 enacted in 2022, underscore the need for revised standards. This legislation modified the California Education Code (CEC) 49600, delineating school counselors as School-Based Mental Health Professionals, outlining their responsibilities to conduct risk assessments and clarifying their work within an MTSS framework.

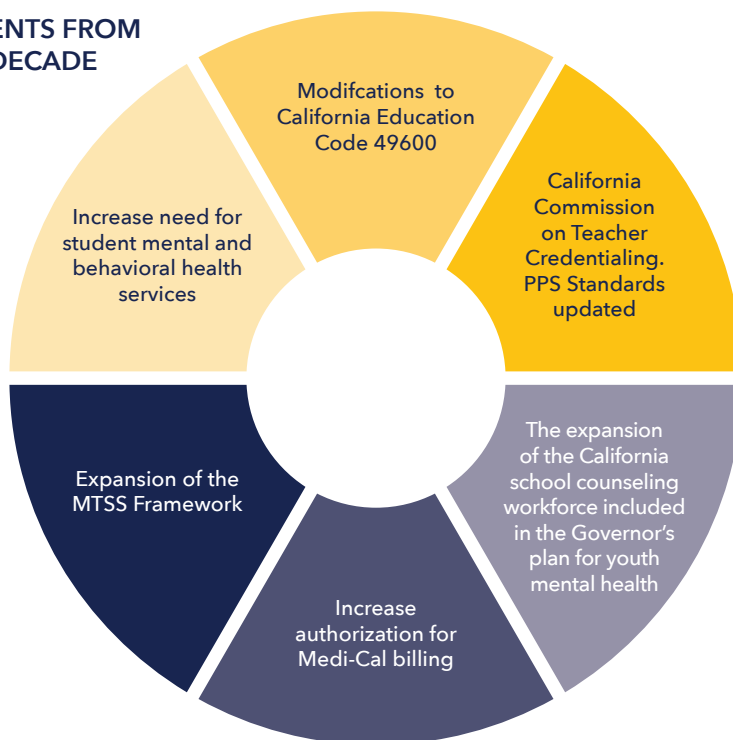
Medi-Cal LEA BOP: Commencing on January 1, 2023, updates to CEC 49600 expanded school counselors' identity as "Providers" within the MediCal Local Education Agency (LEA) Billing Option Program (BOP). School counselors' authorization expanded as listed in the Local Educational Agency (LEA) Billing Codes and Reimbursement Rates. This resulted in increases in reimbursement rates and recognized school counselors as providing necessary services such as individual and group counseling, intake and assessment, and case management. Reimbursement rates are now tantamount to licensed mental health professionals working in schools.

Supervision Requirements: (Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 5, § 80049.1) Another factor in the forming of the Standards was legislation aimed at integrating multidisciplinary mental and behavioral health teams on school campuses. In 2021 California invested \$4.2 billion to enact the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI). The CYBHI expanded upon the concept of schools as a center for health and mental health services through the California Community Schools Partnership Program that institutionalized a new associate/undergraduate degree program called wellness coaches. Individuals who are working on school campuses as wellness coaches will be required to be supervised by those individuals holding a Pupil Personnel Service Credential (Title 5, 80049.1(c)) A joint information brief written by leaders from the California Association of School Psychologists, the California Association of School Social Workers, and the California Association of School Counselors describes the role of these individuals in providing supervision for volunteers, paraprofessionals, and licensed professionals.

Governor's Initiatives: In 2022 Governor Newsom published a 10-point strategic plan with one of the goal areas dedicated to expanding the use of school counselors. This goal was supported by specific provisions to strengthen the school counselor workforce through several initiatives. The Golden State Teachers Grant Program began in the fall of 2022, offering up to \$20,000 in grants for school counselor candidates. In 2023 California enacted a grant program that supports university and LEA partnerships. The California School Counselor Residency Program provided regional and technical-assistant grant funds specifically to increase graduate student retention and improve school counseling overall.

The Process of Developing Standards

KEY ELEMENTS FROM THE PAST DECADE



The Writing and Design Team identified key elements that had changed over the past decade. The California Standards for the School Counseling Profession are organized within six interdependent domains of practice. The Standards were developed through an extensive process that explored the emerging needs in education and changes in laws and policies that directly impacted the school counseling profession and involved a thorough review of research (see the Bibliography for a selection of supporting sources). Furthermore, the design team sought the input of experts and reviewed data from focus groups and surveys.

In the fall of 2022, a team of school counselors, school administrators, counselor educators, representatives from county offices of education, and individuals from the private sector assembled to reimagine how new professional standards could empower school counselors to meet the ever-changing needs of our children and youth. The Standards Design Team had extensive discussions that came from a thorough review of conditions and measures related to school effectiveness. Given the constantly shifting challenges and growing duties confronting school counselors in California, the consensus within the team was that this is an opportune time for fresh standards and benchmarks. They discussed changes in the educational

ecosystem that had occurred over the past 15 years. The group cited the stark rise in student mental health concerns, the pervasive influence of social media and technology, the far-reaching impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the shifting dynamics of the 21st-century job market, as well as the changes in laws and how California evaluates an effective school (Local Control Funding Formula and the Local Control Accountability Plan).

The Standards articulate a positive and optimistic orientation toward school counseling, accentuating the cultivation of strengths. Aspirational in nature, these Standards were conceived with a forward-looking lens, intended to operate within the dynamic and evolving landscape of school counseling. While grounded in the present, they adapt and evolve in tandem with the changing demands and expectations of the profession. This forward-thinking stance challenges school and community partners, including school leaders, policy makers, and institutions of higher education, to transcend conventional practices and systems, and to strive for innovative approaches that place the prospects of every student at the forefront.

Integral to this comprehensive development process was the consideration of the day-to-day responsibilities of school counselors, coupled with the evolving demands on the education landscape. Anticipating the future role school counselors will play in meeting these demands was also considered. Consequently, the Standards provides a guide that steers school counselors in adeptly tackling the changing conditions in education as they occur, supporting California school counselors to persist as a pivotal influence in the California education community for years to come.

CASC played a central role throughout this development journey. The CASC Board of Directors, committee members, and dedicated volunteers were instrumental in driving the process forward, providing valuable insights and ensuring the representation of diverse perspectives. Recognizing the profound significance of the Standards to the profession, CASC assumed leadership in the stewardship of the Standards moving forward.

The public was provided with an opportunity to contribute to this process. By extending an invitation for public commentary on the draft of the Standards, valuable feedback was gathered, enriching the final product with a broader perspective.

To summarize, the development of the California Standards for the School Counseling Profession (2023) was a collaborative endeavor that embraced research, stakeholder input, legislative alignment, professional benchmarks, and public engagement. This multifaceted approach ensures that the resulting standards are well-informed, relevant, and reflective of the evolving role of school counselors in the dynamic landscape of education.

The Standards: Utility and Application

Professional standards define the nature and quality of work of individuals who practice that profession. They are created for and by the profession to guide practice and to provide structures for hiring, supervision, and evaluation. They inform government policies and regulatory bodies that oversee the profession. By articulating the scope of work and the values that the profession stands for, standards outline how practitioners can achieve the outcomes that the profession demands and the public expects. Standards are adaptable and are subject to periodic review and refinement in order to accurately mirror the evolving insights, expectations, and contextual factors that shape the landscape of the profession. This dynamism ensures that the standards remain relevant and reflective of the profession's evolving nature.

The Standards are foundational to all levels of school counseling. They can be applied to the work of elementary, middle, and high school counselors and can serve as a guide for district leaders as they engage in overseeing the work of school counselors.

Moreover, the Standards serve as an inspiring guide for school counselors, encouraging them to push their boundaries and attain a level of excellence irrespective of their career stage. Ultimately, the revised California Standards of the School Counseling Profession epitomize a progressive outlook. They not only reflect the current educational landscape but also beckon the entire profession to rise to the occasion, delivering exceptional support to students and continually adapting to the evolving landscape of education and well-being.

Overview of Key Changes in the Standards

The updated Standards have introduced a significant focus on mental and behavioral health, introducing a brand-new standard exclusively dedicated to this area. Additionally, the inclusion of the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework is noteworthy. While school counselors have historically played a pivotal role in prioritizing preventive services and treatment, the MTSS framework emphasizes the cultivation of supportive and equitable environments for all students. As a result, the inclusion of a dedicated MTSS standard became imperative. Furthermore, the role of school counselors in utilizing assessment tools (such as suicide and risk assessments and universal screening) is emphasized both within the MTSS Standard and throughout the Standards. The process of referring and tracking students receiving intensive school- or community-based services has also introduced a new term, “case management,” aligning with the guidelines outlined in the Medi-Cal billing providers manual for such services.

“The revised California Standards for the School Counseling profession offer a vital and contemporary framework, equipping school counselors with the understanding they require to excel in their roles.”

- Joanna Aragon, school counselor
Pittsburg Unified School District

The Organization of the Standards

The School Counseling Profession in California is structured into six standard categories. Elements and indicators are aligned under each standard. The number of elements for each standard varies, and the order does not imply relative importance of a particular standard. Each element is further modified with a set of indicators, to further explain how one might see the element manifested.

1. Professional School Counselor Development—Emphasizes a commitment to continuous professional growth, enabling school counselors to address evolving student needs and refine their practices.
2. School-Based Mental Health—Recognizes the importance of students' emotional well-being and provides the necessary support to ensure a conducive learning environment.
3. School Counseling Domains: Academic, Postsecondary, and Social Emotional Development—Encompasses Academic, Postsecondary, and Social Emotional Development, fostering a balanced and holistic approach to student development.
4. Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) —Implements a tiered approach to intervention and assistance to address the diverse needs of students through a Multi-Tiered System of Support.
5. Indirect Services: Coordination, Collaboration, Consultation, & Supervision—Focuses on the collaborative efforts of coordination, consultation, and supervision to establish a nurturing and collaborative ecosystem that supports student success through indirect services.
6. Creating and Maintaining Safe, Supportive, and Inclusive Environments for Student Well-being—Ensures that the school environment is safe and inclusive for the overall well-being of students.

Rationale and Purpose of the Standards

The California Standards for the School Counseling Profession are a foundational framework designed to clarify the essential principles, goals, and expectations that guide the practice of school counselors across the state. In this section, we delve into the rationale and purpose behind these standards, shedding light on the critical role that each one plays in enhancing the effectiveness and consistency of school counseling services. By exploring the overarching objectives they aim to achieve, we gain a deeper understanding of why these standards are a vital tool for promoting student success, well-being, and equitable access to educational opportunities throughout California's diverse school communities.

Standard 1—Professional School Counselor Development

This standard underscores the critical commitment of school counselors to their ongoing professional growth and adaptability, enabling them to effectively address evolving student needs. It emphasizes their role as leaders in comprehensive counseling programs, requiring collaboration, advocacy, and a commitment to social justice and equity. Ethical mandates and reflective practices are central to this standard, ensuring high standards of professionalism. Additionally, it highlights the importance of staying current with milestones in the field of school counseling and educational research and actively engaging in continuous growth and professional development, all with the ultimate aim of providing the best support and advocacy for students.

Standard 2—School-Based Mental Health

This standard calls attention to the importance of prioritizing students' emotional well-being and its direct impact on their academic success and overall quality of life. It aims to provide the essential support necessary for creating a conducive learning environment. By recognizing that mental health challenges can significantly hinder a student's academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and overall educational experience, this standard outlines a comprehensive framework. This framework informs the delivery of high-quality school mental

and behavioral health programs, with a specific focus on addressing these needs within educational settings. The standard emphasizes the pivotal role of school counselors as School-Based Mental Health Professionals, promoting a whole-system approach that includes policy development to foster a positive school climate, early identification and management of mental health concerns, the provision of individual and group counseling services, and the coordination of care systems in collaboration with community partners. Its purpose is to ensure that students have the necessary mental health support to thrive academically and personally.

Standard 3–School Counseling Domains: Academic, Postsecondary, and Social Emotional Development

This standard embodies a comprehensive and holistic approach to student development, encompassing the three domains within the school counseling profession: Academic, Postsecondary, and Social Emotional Development. Its rationale lies in a student outcome-driven model, recognizing the multifaceted nature of students' growth and success. It emphasizes the pivotal role of school counselors in addressing academic needs and facilitating seamless transitions between academic levels, fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment. In the realm of Postsecondary Development, school counselors guide students through a preschool-to-profession support system, empowering them to make informed decisions about their futures and ensuring equitable access to resources. Finally, in Social Emotional Development, school counselors play a vital role in nurturing students' emotional well-being through tailored Social Emotional Learning (SEL) lessons, and through support, and resource dissemination.

Standard 4–Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

This standard's rationale is rooted in the imperative to effectively address the diverse needs of students by implementing a tiered approach through a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). Its purpose is to underscore the indispensable role of school counselors in creating a comprehensive environment that addresses the diverse needs of every student. Through their active participation in team decision-making, school counselors make substantial contributions to the widespread implementation of MTSS, resulting in enhanced social behavioral and academic outcomes for all students. MTSS's capacity to categorize support levels based on intensity equips schools to identify and deliver personalized interventions tailored to each student's specific needs. School counselors utilize data to improve the overall school climate, with a focus on identifying systemic barriers and enhancing student outcomes. Their dedicated involvement within the MTSS framework is essential in creating an inclusive and supportive school environment that empowers every student to excel academically, socially, and emotionally, while also preparing them for a successful future beyond school.

Standard 5—Indirect Services: Coordination, Collaboration, Consultation, and Supervision

This standard highlights the importance of collaborative efforts in coordination, consultation, and supervision to establish a nurturing and supportive ecosystem that bolsters student success through indirect services. The foundation for this standard lies in recognizing the critical role school counselors play in delivering indirect services, which contribute significantly to students' overall well-being and academic achievement. The standard emphasizes the significance of fostering partnerships with various educational partners, both within the school and the broader community, to enhance the range of school-based services available. This includes resource identification through community asset mapping, the effective implementation of comprehensive programs through professional learning communities, and collaborative initiatives with teachers, parents, and community service providers to effect positive change in students. School counselors also provide consultative support to address student-related issues and guide educational partners on academic, postsecondary, and mental health matters. Lastly, this standard highlights school counselors' supervision of various professionals, volunteers, and pre-service counselors, ensuring adherence to state law [Cal Code of Regs. 80049.1(c)] for the benefit and protection of students. The purpose of this standard is to establish a collaborative ecosystem that maximizes support for student success through indirect services delivered by school counselors.

Standard 6—Creating and Maintaining Safe, Supportive, and Inclusive Environments for Student Well-being

The foundation of this standard is based on the goal of establishing an inclusive, secure, and nurturing school environment that enhances students' holistic well-being. Its purpose is to highlight the pivotal role of school counselors in strengthening the school climate by fostering participation, engagement, connection, and a sense of belonging among all students and staff, as well as intervening early to address behavioral issues. By doing so, school counselors contribute to a more supportive learning environment that enhances academic outcomes and nurtures positive relationships among students, staff, caregivers, and educational partners. This standard recognizes that safe and inclusive environments promote the engagement, appreciation, exploration, and respect of diverse perspectives, ensuring equitable access to opportunities and resources for all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities. Ultimately, school counselors are charged with advocating for a supportive environment that positively influences the mental health and well-being of every student.

1

STANDARD ONE**PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR DEVELOPMENT**

Emphasizes a commitment to continuous professional growth, enabling school counselors to address evolving student needs and refine their practices.

ELEMENT 1A: LEADERSHIP - Effective school counselors emphasize leadership in the creation of comprehensive school counseling programs. School counselors exhibit leadership qualities through collaboration, advocacy, utilizing measurable student outcomes, and a dedication to social justice and equity.

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 1A-1: develop action plans to yield measurable student outcomes that demonstrate intentionality within the scope of services delivered to all students.

Indicator 1A-2: promote meaningful change within school communities by strategizing on programmatic needs and gaps in service delivery, and by inspiring solution-focused transformations that benefit students, teachers, administrators, caregivers, and district leaders.

Indicator 1A-3: communicate the appropriate roles, responsibilities, and duties related to the school counseling profession with educational partners, including, but not limited to students, teachers, administrators, district leaders, board members, families, caregivers, and community partners.

Indicator 1A-4: model for student and staff the importance of mutual respect and embracing the social, cultural, and linguistic diversities of the school community.

ELEMENT 1B: REFLECTIVE & ETHICAL PRACTICE - Effective school counselors emphasize the importance of upholding ethical mandates and developing a critical reflective practice.

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 1B-1: operate consistently within the parameters of federal, state, and local laws, policies, regulations, and statutory requirements.

Indicator 1B-2: follow mandated reporting protocols.

Indicator 1B-3: actively integrate ethical practices into their daily work as outlined by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA).

Indicator 1B-4: assess and develop a plan for areas of professional growth through self-reflective practice.

ELEMENT 1C: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT - Effective school counselors continuously refine their skills, expand their knowledge base, and enhance their effectiveness in supporting the academic, personal, and social growth of their students through ongoing professional development.

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 1C-1: stay current on innovations in the field of school counseling and education, by reviewing relevant literature, staying up-to-date with research and informed on best practices.

Indicator 1C-2: participate in professional learning activities, such as workshops, seminars, trainings, and conferences to enhance their skills and knowledge with the intent of expanding their expertise and staying current within professional practices.

Indicator 1C-3: belong to state and national professional associations and participate in professional leadership to support the advancement of the profession.

ELEMENT 1D: CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELING - Effective school counselors recognize and leverage the cultural assets and resources students of diverse backgrounds, rejecting biased or stereotypical materials and enhancing the curriculum to embrace their heritage.

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 1D-1: address individual assumptions, values, and beliefs to support students' diverse academic, linguistic, cultural, social-emotional, physical, and economic strengths and requirements.

Indicator 1D-2: integrate students' diverse cultural backgrounds and life experiences into school counseling practices.

Indicator 1D-3: identify and address systemic bias within a school system.

Indicator 1D-4: lead comprehensive and culturally sustaining school counseling programs.

2

STANDARD TWO

SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH

Recognizes the importance of students' emotional well-being and provides the necessary support to ensure a conducive learning environment.

ELEMENT 2A: SCHOOL-WIDE MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

PROMOTION - Effective school counselors focus on preventive care rather than reactive. Activities associated with this standard include preventing academic and/or social problems by building a healthy learning environment for students. This includes building systems and addressing policies where mental and behavioral health are valued and prioritized and by employing inclusive and culturally responsive strategies that reduce stigma and remove systemic barriers.

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 2A-1: collaborate within educational systems to foster a robust, welcoming, and encouraging school environment by employing diverse delivery models and methods such as classroom education, trauma-informed practices, restorative approaches, and culturally responsive techniques.

Indicator 2A-2: use various mental and behavioral health assessments to understand students' needs, analyze schoolwide data, set up screening procedures, and keep a record of resources for addressing these needs.

Indicator 2A-3: facilitate culturally responsive and inclusive mental and behavioral health training and educational programs for students, staff, and parents, including, but not limited to, early warning sign recognition, trauma-informed care, and restorative practices.

ELEMENT 2B: COMPREHENSIVE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR IDENTIFIED STUDENTS - Effective school counselors play a vital role in early identification of students or subgroups who display early signs and symptoms of mental health problems through specialized support services.

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 2B-1: design and monitor systems for early identification of students needing additional mental health support.

Indicator 2B-2: provide targeted interventions that are delivered through individual and group counseling services.

Indicator 2B-3: facilitate peer mentoring programs to enhance social support on campus.

Indicator 2B-4: provide immediate support to students, staff, and families during times of crisis.

ELEMENT 2C: ADDRESSING ACUTE AND CHRONIC MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS - Effective school counselors are at the intersection of education with intensive support systems to address acute and chronic mental health needs of students. This includes conducting suicide assessments and working as a conduit for therapeutic treatment of students.

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 2C-1: participate in interdisciplinary teams to provide care coordination including identifying, referring, monitoring, and evaluating progress.

Indicator 2C-2: catalog a list of internal and external resources to meet the diverse mental and behavioral health needs of all students and families.

Indicator 2C-3: monitor and document student progress within an Individual Service Plan, that could also include Targeted Case Management (TCM) service.

Indicator 2C-4: work as service providers within reimbursable billing structures such as MediCal, Manage Care, or other medical billing programs.

3

STANDARD THREE**SCHOOL COUNSELING DOMAINS:****Academic, Postsecondary, and Social Emotional Development**

Encompasses Academic, Postsecondary, and Social Emotional Development, fostering a balanced and holistic approach to student development.

ELEMENT 3A: ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT - Effective school counselors foster academic excellence and success for all students by considering individual strengths, needs, and challenges. School counselors collaborate with various educational partners to provide appropriate support, eliminate barriers, and guide students on their educational pathways, contributing to a positive and empowering learning experience for all students within the school community.

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 3A-1: collaborate with students to develop academic plans and equitably address academic needs by implementing an ongoing review system that includes, but is not limited to credit recovery, tutoring, skill-based interventions toward meeting promotion and graduation requirements.

Indicator 3A-2: work with students, teachers, parents, caregivers, and community members, to ensure student academic achievement.

Indicator 3A-3: provide transitional services between pivotal grade levels that communicate academic expectations and engage students and families in academic planning to meet requirements for continued success.

Indicator 3A-4: promote rigorous coursework aligned with grade-level expectations, state and national standards, and college and career pathways.

ELEMENT 3B: POSTSECONDARY DEVELOPMENT - Effective school counselors work within a cradle to career support system. In a scope and sequence frame, they educate students at all grade levels and prepare students to access various postsecondary options and provide comprehensive information regarding career pathways and financial aid to support informed decision making. Additionally, they educate students and caregivers on the sequential steps needed to prepare for admission into postsecondary institutions and workforce opportunities.

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 3B-1: create a robust, equitable, and inclusive preschool to profession system that is differentiated to the diverse needs and interests of all students. This process involves leveraging technology and the forging of business community partnerships and other organizations that can contribute to student career goals, while creating a comprehensive support network that enhances their chances for workforce success.

Indicator 3B-2: provide personalized counseling for students, accounting for their intellectual strengths, unique aspirations and interests. School counselors guide and advise students about the various postsecondary eligibility criteria and options available to them, such as 2-year colleges, 4-year colleges, technical colleges, the military, apprenticeships, and direct employment opportunities.

Indicator 3B-3: inform students and families about the necessary steps to apply for postsecondary and work-based learning opportunities. This includes providing guidance on academic requirements such as the A-G and college admission requirements, financial aid application processes like the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the California Dream Act Application (CADAA), military enlistment opportunities, and participation in specialized readiness programs such as, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) early college program, dual enrollment, advanced placement, and International Baccalaureate Program.

Indicator 3B-4: provide lessons, workshops, and resources to students and families on topics related to career development, college, and all postsecondary options, as well as workplace and employability skills. These lessons and workshops cover essential topics around employability. Additionally, school counselors work within college and career readiness systems to administer career inventories that help both students and families gain a deeper understanding of the students' career and personal interests and skills.

ELEMENT 3C: TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

DEVELOPMENT - Effective school counselors provide grade-level appropriate Social Emotional Learning (SEL) lessons, fostering emotional intelligence and well-being in students. This comprehensive approach integrates SEL principles into a schoolwide skill-building system, aligned with grade-level standards and SEL benchmarks, ensuring a positive and lasting impact on students' lives both inside and outside the school environment.

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 3C-1: develop and implement grade-level appropriate SEL lessons integrated into the instructional program that foster emotional intelligence and well-being in students.

Indicator 3C-2: provide self management and relationship skills to help students understand the impact of their actions on themselves and others as a guide to navigating challenging situations and promoting their emotional growth.

Indicator 3C-3: prepare and disseminate resources and training for school staff members, parents, and caregivers on SEL strategies.

Indicator 3C-4: develop comprehensive schoolwide systems that incorporate SEL principles aligned with grade-level standards and SEL benchmarks. These systems are integrated into various aspects of the school, including classroom instruction, school culture, and extracurricular activities.

4

STANDARD FOUR**MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT**

Implements a tiered approach to intervention and assistance to address the diverse needs of students through a Multi-Tiered System of Support.

ELEMENT 4A: CA MTSS FRAMEWORK - Effective school counselors design and deliver programs and services aligned with the California MTSS framework.

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 4A-1: design and deliver Tier 1 universal interventions in the form of a whole child approach through universal screening, classroom instruction, schoolwide programming, and parent education.

Indicator 4A-2: provide Tier 2 interventions including small group and individual counseling, consultation and collaboration with school personnel, families, and community partners.

Indicator 4A-3: support Tier 3 services through individual counseling, suicide risk and threat assessments, safety and reentry plans, brief behavior support plans, intensive progress monitoring, consultation, collaboration and facilitation of referrals.

ELEMENT 4B: DATA INFORMED DECISION MAKING - Effective school counselors utilize data to inform decision-making and drive improvements in student outcomes.

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 4B-1: collaborate with the MTSS team to collect, disaggregate, and analyze school-wide data (e.g., attendance, discipline, etc.) to identify systemic barriers and equity gaps.

Indicator 4B-2: use data to identify and improve student outcomes including setting measurable goals and monitoring the impact of implementation.

Indicator 4B-3: employ various data sources, encompassing screening and progress monitoring information to guide instructional choices and counseling interventions and determine transitions within the multi-level prevention framework.

ELEMENT 4C: SYSTEMS - Effective school counselors foster a school-wide approach aimed at enhancing and refining MTSS to better meet the needs of all students through establishing collaborative partnerships.

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 4C-1: work in conjunction with educational partners to address challenges specific to MTSS implementation, such as building consensus that identifies and removes barriers that hinder the development of an effective multi-tiered system during the implementation process.

Indicator 4C-2: assess supports offered through MTSS, ensuring they adopt a strengths-based, culturally responsive approach designed to enhance accessibility and engagement, ultimately striving to promote equitable access for all students.

Indicator 4C-3: gather input from community partners, including staff, families, and the community to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach to MTSS decision-making.

5

STANDARD FIVE**INDIRECT SERVICES:****Coordination, Collaboration, Consultation, & Supervision**

Focuses on the collaborative efforts of coordination, consultation, and supervision to establish a nurturing and collaborative ecosystem that supports student success through indirect services.

ELEMENT 5A: COORDINATION & COLLABORATION - Effective school counselors emphasize working together with various partners within the school and the broader community to enhance school-based services.

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 5A-1: coordinate school and community resources to meet the needs of students and families.

Indicator 5A-2: actively coordinate and participate in interdisciplinary teams, including union representation, school site council, and other advisory committees.

Indicator 5A-3: coordinate school counseling professional learning communities (PLCs) to facilitate the implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs and services.

ELEMENT 5B: CONSULTATION - Effective school counselors engage with consultees (parent, teacher, administrator, etc.) with the primary objective of fostering positive change in students.

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 5B-1: provide consultative support to teachers and other school staff to effectively address student-related issues and foster academic success.

Indicator 5B-2: offer consultative support to parents/caregivers, guiding them on matters pertaining to their child's academic, postsecondary, and social emotional needs.

Indicator 5B-3: engage in consultations with community-based service providers, including state licensed practitioners, to ensure effective communication regarding student progress.

Indicator 5B-4: consulting with teachers, staff, and families in comprehending how issues are interconnected within broader systems.

ELEMENT 5C: SUPERVISION - Effective school counselors take on the responsibility of overseeing and guiding various professionals, agencies, volunteers, paraprofessionals and pre-service school counselors who provide pupil personnel related services within the school setting as required in law (80049.1(c)).

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 5C-1: supervise school-based activities by community-based service providers who do not hold a valid Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) credential but are involved in delivering psychology and counseling services on school campuses.

Indicator 5C-2: oversee the activities of volunteers and paraprofessionals who are involved in delivering counseling and psychology-related support within the school setting.

Indicator 5C-3: maintain structured supervisory relationships with preservice school counselors, adhering to effective practices from literature and university fieldwork guidelines.

6

STANDARD SIX**CREATING & MAINTAINING SAFE, SUPPORTIVE, AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR STUDENT WELLBEING**

Ensures that the school environment is inclusive, safe, and supportive for the overall well-being of students.

ELEMENT 6A: SCHOOL CLIMATE - Effective school counselors foster a positive school climate promoting inclusivity, empathy, and respectful interactions among students and staff in order to reduce conflict.

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 6A-1: assist students with examining their identities, personal values, biases, and assumptions while fostering understanding and acceptance of diverse cultures and experiences.

Indicator 6A-2: create opportunities for students to learn communication, problem solving and conflict resolution skills that help them achieve their goals and establish successful relationships.

Indicator 6A-3: engage in prevention programs and activities aimed at anti-bullying, anti-harassment and violence prevention, while also facilitating peer mediation and conflict resolution.

Indicator 6A-4: collaborate with school leadership to monitor and evaluate attendance, discipline, and other pertinent data to improve overall school climate.

Indicator 6A-5: ensure that students from historically marginalized backgrounds, including those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnicity subgroups, English learners, youth in foster care, youth experiencing homelessness, students with special needs are, LGBTQI+, are not subjected to discrimination based on their identity factors.

ELEMENT 6B: SCHOOL SAFETY - Effective school counselors contribute to a safe and secure learning environment by being accessible for reporting threats, intervening with students involved in unsafe behaviors and incorporating substance abuse prevention measures.

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 6B-1: conduct suicide, threat and risk assessments to identify potential safety concerns and collaborate with relevant educational partners to develop appropriate interventions.

Indicator 6B-2: educate students, families, and the school community about topics related to substance abuse prevention, including but not limited to conducting awareness campaigns, and providing support to individuals at risk of substance misuse.

Indicator 6B-3: participate in district and school response team planning and practices and assist in helping students and staff are able to process/understand crisis response drills.

Indicator 6B-4: create a structured reintegration program for students who are returning to school following suspension or expulsion, incorporating ongoing monitoring and counseling support.

ELEMENT 6C: SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT - Effective school counselors foster academic, social, and personal engagement through strategies that promote involvement, collaboration, and a sense of belonging within the school community.

Effective school counselors:

Indicator 6C-1: promote school-wide practices that are culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and restorative, fostering environments that are inclusive and equitable.

Indicator 6C-2: identify and address underlying issues such as learning difficulties, lack of interest, external stressors, attendance, and disciplinary issues, thereby enhancing students' academic engagement with specialized interventions.

Indicator 6C-3: encourage students to establish connections within peer-to-peer relationships, as well as with younger and older students, teachers, administrators, student support staff, and the broader school community.

Indicator 6C-4: empower students to identify personal interests, set goals, and explore extracurricular activities or projects that foster personal engagement and a sense of purpose.

Glossary of Terms

Advanced Placement (AP): a college-level course offered at the high school level. These courses also offer the opportunity to obtain undergraduate college credit via examinations provided by the College Board.

Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID): program that offers support and supplemental materials for schools to encourage college and career readiness.

Behavioral health: the way in which habits may impact mental and physical well-being.

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC or Commission): an agency in the executive branch of the California state government. It was created in 1970 by the Ryan Act and is the oldest of the autonomous state standards boards in the nation.

Comprehensive School Counseling Program (CSCP): intentional programming that promotes and encourages the academic, social-emotional, college and career readiness of all students, informed by data and driven by culturally sustainable practices.

Confidentiality (CA Education Code 49602): Any information disclosed by a student 12 years of age or older to a school counselor in a counseling capacity is confidential. Furthermore, this information should not be noted in the student's records without prior written consent.

Culturally sustaining/responsive: responding and being with others in a way that respects and affirms their various backgrounds (e.g., racial, ethnic, linguistic, social class, ability, gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc.).

Dual enrollment: Some high schools have partnerships with local community colleges wherein students are allowed to enroll in college courses and obtain high school and college credit.

Educational counseling (CA Education Code 49600): specifies the mandated components of a district educational counseling program, including specific counseling strategies and activities conducted by school counselors.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): an application that students and families fill out to determine eligibility for financial aid from the federal government. This aid may come in the form of grants, scholarships, work study, and loans (StudentAid.gov).

Individual Educational Plan (IEP): a detailed document that provides information on services for students with intellectual disabilities.

International Baccalaureate (IB) program: an internationally recognized curriculum recognized and offered by 140 countries to students ages 3 to 19. IB programs differ according to developmental age groups (e.g., Primary Years Program, Middle Years Program, and Diploma Program).

Medi-Cal Local Education Agency (LEA) Billing Options Program (BOP): “provides reimbursement to LEAs (school districts, county offices of education, charter schools, community colleges, and university campuses) for health-related services provided by qualified medical practitioners to Medi-Cal eligible students under the age of 22” (ca.gov). Mental and behavioral health evaluation and services fall under BOP.

Mental health: emotional, psychological, and social well-being that may be impacted by thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS): a framework offered by schools to provide targeted support for students who may be struggling. MTSS also focuses efforts on prevention strategies where the whole child is supported. There are three tiers ranging in levels of support from whole school to more individualized support systems.

Needs assessment: a systemic process to determine and address the needs of a school site. The results from a needs assessment can assist in creating programs or identifying gaps in educational programming.

Pupil Personnel Services Standards, Specialization School Counseling: These standards are set by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) and are meant to delineate the responsibilities of school counselors. Details can be found on the CTC website.

Restorative approach: Promoting accountability that separates the person from a behavior, this approach focus on restoration of relationships and any harm caused in situations.

Risk assessment: a systematic process of evaluating potential risks that may be involved in a particular situation or case.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL): an educational program that focuses on the healthy development of student emotions, goal setting, collaborative skills, and making responsible decisions among other skills. SEL encourages school-family-community partnership in creating healthy learning environments (CASEL).

Social justice: justice in relation to distribution of wealth, power, and privileges within a society. Social justice is furthermore the belief that all persons have access to the distribution of these factors and opportunities.

Stigma: a set of negative attitudes or beliefs about or toward a group of people or practices.

Supervision (80049.1(c)): This document provides a formal definition of supervision. Supervision in this case is specific to those seeking licensure in counseling-related fields in PreK–12 settings. The specific statute relates that schools may work with different entities (e.g., community organizations, internship students) to provide pupil-personnel-related services, but that this must be under the supervision of a person holding a pupil-personnel services authorization.

Targeted Case Management (TCM): TCM in schools are services provided by professional staff for the purpose of monitoring and assisting students in their overall life situations including gaining access to needed medical, social, educational and other services necessary to meet basic human needs.

Tier I: Within the MTSS framework, Tier I includes whole-school programs that are preventative in nature. Interventions may include school-wide assemblies, guidance lessons, and the like.

Tier II: Within the MTSS framework, Tier II programs are targeted to a specific part of the student population. One intervention example is conducting small groups.

Tier III: Within the MTSS framework, Tier III interventions are targeted to individual students. Interventions include one-on-one counseling, referrals, etc.

Threat assessment: a systematic process of evaluating the potential to carry out any potential act to harm self or others.

Trauma-informed practices: Trauma-informed practices are a set of approaches and strategies employed in various settings, particularly in schools, designed to create a safe and inclusive environment that takes into account the presence of trauma symptoms and the potential influence of trauma on an individual's behavior. These practices prioritize empathy, understanding, and support, aiming to promote healing, resilience, and overall well-being by fostering a compassionate and nonjudgmental atmosphere where individuals are empowered to heal, learn, and thrive.

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"I hold a deep appreciation for the inclusion of Standard Two in this updated set of standards. This addition highlights the vital role school counselors play in bolstering student mental well-being, often serving as the first point of contact for students seeking support within educational institutions."

- Josh Godinez, vice principal
Corona-Norco Unified School District

"The standards aren't just a document; they're the foundation upon which we build a stronger, more responsive school counseling profession in California, where trust flourishes and the vast needs of all students are expertly met."

- Lori Woodley, CEO
All It Takes

"The revised California School Counseling Standards is a powerful framework that centers the role of school counselors in advancing equity for all students."

- Tessa Carmen De Roy, president
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"The Standards embody a forward-thinking and transformative approach, helping school counselors envision what we want to become as professionals. It places a student-centered focus at the core, guiding us to shape the future of California's education system to better meet the diverse and evolving needs of our students."

- Dr. Caroline Lopez-Perry,

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