
Virginia State University
College of Education
Department of School Counseling



Practicum/Internship Handbook

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Department of School Counseling

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Welcome

The faculty of the School Counseling Department welcomes you! We are delighted you have chosen this program, which is designed to professionally train and prepare those who wish to pursue careers in school-related counseling; it is our pledge to cultivate your training and make your study productive, intellectually stimulating and academically challenging.

To aid in our pledge, a School Counseling Graduate Handbook has been developed to provide you with the necessary guidelines that will enhance your training experience and aid in your completion of this Program. It is also intended to offer guidance in navigating the academic process, enabling you to be more knowledgeable of the responsibilities, expectations, procedures and deadlines of the Program.

This Handbook includes materials that are meant to introduce you to the Departmental regulations and aid your academic progress not preclude academic advisement. In fact, it is required that you work closely with your advisor to coordinate your program. While each advisor is here to work with you, please be advised that it is your responsibility to adhere to all deadlines and complete all graduation requirements.

As Program faculty, we look forward to working with you, collaboratively, to become reflective, effective and competent practitioners who are committed as leaders in the counseling field.

**Virginia State University
School Counseling Department
Practicum/Internship Request Data Sheets**

Student's Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

SS# _____

I will be completing _____ (400 hours) in a 200 hour practicum and a 200 hour internship experience.

Practicum Site: _____ Internship

Site: _____

On-site Supervisor's Name: Practicum: _____

Internship: _____

Address:

City/State/Zip _____

Phone number:

On-site Supervisor's Email Address:

Start Date: Practicum: _____

Internship: _____

Schedule: Days: _____ Hours: _____

Tentative Finished Date:

Practicum: _____ Internship: _____

(School Counseling Candidates need to complete 2 forms – one for each site if
completing practicum and internship).

Structure of the Practicum/Internship Experience

The Counseling Program at VSU requires the Counseling candidate to experience a minimum of 400 clock hours of clinical field placement. [Counseling candidates must complete 200 hours at the elementary level and 200 at the secondary level, in accordance with guidelines mandated by the state of Virginia.] While the actual daily schedule of the Counseling candidate will be determined by the On-Site Supervisor, and the VSU counseling candidate, the minimum number of hours spent on-site at one time is to be no less than a 3-hour block of time. The Practicum /Internship should be structured into four basic phases during at 15-week semester. Interns will the major portion of their supervised time in Phases Two and Three.

1. Phase One: Orientation & Observation: This includes a physical tour of the site and meeting staff, faculty, and students/clients. The Counseling Candidate should be give a clear sense of office routine and policies, including work hours, use of equipment and clerical personnel. The site student counselor should be instructed in any additional counselor duties, specific to the site. It is during this first phase that the student counselor primarily shadows and observes the On-Site Supervisor, to include multiple observations of individual counseling, small group counseling and other counseling activities. Once this phase has been completed, Phase Two begins.
2. Phase Two: Co-counseling. The On-Site Supervisor and the Counseling Candidate start to co-plan and co-facilitate. They also co-counsel individual students/clients and co-lead groups counseling sessions. Early in this phase, the Counseling Candidate and On-Site Supervisor will do a realistic appraisal of the candidate's skills.
3. Phase Three: More Responsibility. While still under supervision, the Counseling candidate gradually takes more responsibility for the duties of the counselor. The Counseling Candidate should plan and lead group counseling sessions, conduct individual counseling sessions, engage in conferences/intakes, and engage in all appropriate local screening proceedings. Specific sites might include other responsibilities.
4. Phase Four: Closure. The Counseling Candidate gradually withdraws from his/her responsibilities at the site and engages in closing activities.

Responsibilities of the Counseling Candidate:

The counseling candidate is simultaneously a temporary staff member of the cooperating site and a counseling candidate at Virginia State University. The quality of roles includes specific responsibilities.

1. The Counseling Candidate must have achieved candidacy, submitted the clinical practice application and supporting materials for the school division site. The candidate must maintain a 3.0 GPA. Only 6 credits of C's are allowed for graduation. *Grades of C are not acceptable in the following courses:* in any course in the school counseling program for state licensure that must be completed before the Counseling Candidate may participate in the practicum and internship course.

2. It is the responsibility of the Counseling candidate to make certain the Practicum/Internship application is completed and submitted to Dr. Claire W. Robinson. The counseling candidate must also be registered for the COUN 537/COUN 549. NOTE: It is requested that the counseling candidate purchase professional liability insurance and provide a background check for the clinical experience.
3. The Counseling candidate will attend all VSU Practicum/Internship classes – COUN 537/COUN549.
4. The Counseling candidate will keep a daily field site log of activities. This log will be reviewed during the weekly supervision meeting by the On-site Supervisor. The log will reflect a balance of experiences as they directly relate to counseling at that specific site. The log must be signed by the On-Site Supervisor and submitted to the University Supervisor at the termination of the Clinical Practice. No final grade will be entered until all documentation is in the student's permanent file.
5. The On-Site Supervisor must be present when the Counseling Candidate is on-site. The counseling candidate will follow the site calendar until the end of the VSU semester. Exceptions to this schedule should be discussed with the University and On-site Supervisors.
6. It is important that the Counseling Candidate recognize the intensity of the requirements of Practicum/Internship experience. Counseling candidates are expected to budget their time wisely, making the Practicum/Internship experience their primary focus.
7. The Counseling Candidate is required to maintain a professional attitude and appearance during the entire clinical experience. Conduct at the site must be in accordance with the standards of the site in regard to appropriate appearance, conduct work proficiency, and relations with colleagues and supervisors.
8. The Counseling Candidate is required to follow the site policy regarding notification of absences for illness. All other absences must be pre-approved by the On-Site Supervisor. The University Supervisor should be notified of all absences by the following weekly class meeting.
9. The Counseling candidate will provide the University Supervisor with a packet of final Practicum/Internship documents before any final grade is submitted to the registrar. Included in this packet:
 - a. Original copy of clinical practice contract
 - b. Log of hours
 - c. On-Site Supervisor's final evaluation of Counseling Candidate
 - d. Clinical practice portfolio.

Professional School Counselor's Portfolio

The Professional School Counselor's Portfolio is an accumulation of documents that provides the counseling candidate with a visual representation of her/his experience. It is an evolving record that authenticates a person's growth, skill, and knowledge in a specific discipline. The contents of this portfolio should reflect one's professional philosophy and collegiate experience.

- I. Professional Documentation
 - A. Resume
 - B. Academic Transcripts
 - C. Professional Memberships, Honors, Awards
 - D. Letters of Recommendation / Accommodation (optional)
 - E. Clinical Practice Experience
 - a. Practicum/Internship Contracts
 - b. Practicum/Internship Log of Hours**

- III. Professional Development
 - a. Role Statement - A written three-page statement to reflect your role as a professional school counselor, to include:
 - i. Role Statement - articulate what you perceive the role of the professional counselor to be.
 - ii. Theoretical Framework - identify your counseling framework that you will espouse in your practice. Talk about why, in general, this theory is appropriate for use with your population and with your counseling style.
 - iii. Focus - what is your focus at this point in your career? This might be answered by defining the population you want to work with once you graduate. Another way to address this is to identify specific issues that are of interest to you (e.g., conflict resolution, peer refusal skills, issues of loss, substance abuse, domestic abuse, etc.). Make sure your discussion ties in with your role statement.
 - b. Counseling Brochure or Power point - incorporate pertinent information regarding your school placement.
 - c. Professional Library
 - i. Select at least two counseling resources for your professional collection..
 - d. Referral Lists
 - i. This list might include: Child Protective Services, community mental health facilities, licensed practicing social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and specialists who work with children and families.

- B. Program Implementation – copies of any programs implemented during placement.
 - a. Individual counseling
 - b. Group counseling
 - c. Case management
 - d. Consultation
 - e. Coordination
 - f. School counseling curriculum
 - g. Classroom guidance
 - h. Parent education

- C. Evaluation:
 - a. Evaluations from On-Site Supervisors
 - i. Mid-term
 - ii. Final Evaluation
 - b. *Self-Evaluation of the Practicum/Internship experience.* Write a one-page paper describing your growth and your strengths. How have you meet the personal goals you set for yourself at the beginning of the term? What are your goals for growth for your clinical practice experience?

School Counseling Professional Dispositions

Professional Performance Criteria

The American Counseling Association code of ethics requires counselor candidates and counselor trainees to maintain standards of professional competence and possess good moral character. Therefore, the Counseling Department in the Professional Education Programs Unit at Virginia State University requires its counseling candidates to exhibit the following:

Communication Skills

- Clear presentation and demonstration of multicultural competencies in counseling skills
- Clear oral communication
- Clear written communication
- Clear ability to demonstrate effective and supportive helping skills
- Clear ability to demonstrate effective listening skills

Collaboration

- Respect for the opinion and dignity of others
- Ability to collaborate with others
- Ability to demonstrate effective interpersonal skills
- Ability to participate as a colleague and team member in all aspects of professional training

Professionalism

- Commitment to the psychological well-being, health, and wellness for all people
- Sound judgment
- Integrity and honesty
- Punctuality
- Positive attitude
- Ability to meet deadlines
- Ability to maintain confidentiality with clients, students, and colleagues
- Appropriate assertiveness
- Ability to manage stress
- Ability to accept personal responsibility
- Ability to receive and reflect upon constructive criticism
- Commitment to multiculturalism and diversity
- Respect of multiculturalism and diverse cultures
- Ability to meet requirements as stated in course syllabi
- Demonstration of openness, willingness to learn, and positive attitude about multiculturalism and diverse cultures
- Adherence to ACA ethical guidelines
- Adherence to ASCA ethical guidelines

Ethical Standards for Counselor Candidates

American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics (1995)

Section A: The Counseling Relationship

A.1. Client Welfare

- a. **Primary Responsibility.** The primary responsibility of counselors is to respect the dignity and to promote the welfare of clients.
- b. **Positive Growth and Development.** Counselors encourage client growth and development in ways that foster the client's interest and welfare; counselors avoid fostering dependent counseling relationships.
- c. **Counseling Plans.** Counselors and their clients work jointly in devising integrated, individual counseling plans that offer reasonable promise of success and are consistent with abilities and circumstances of clients. Counselors and clients regularly review counseling plans to ensure their continued viability and effectiveness, respecting client's freedom of choice. (See A.3.b.)
- d. **Family Involvement.** Counselors recognize that families are usually important in clients' lives and strive to enlist family understanding and involvement as a positive resource, when appropriate.
- e. **Career and Employment Needs.** Counselors work with their clients in considering employment in jobs and circumstances that are consistent with the client's overall abilities, vocational limitations, physical restrictions, general temperament, interest and aptitude patterns, social skills, education, general qualifications, and other relevant characteristics and needs. Counselors neither place nor participate in placing clients in positions that will result in damaging the interest and the welfare of clients, employers, or the public.

A.2. Respecting Diversity

- a. **Nondiscrimination.** Counselors do not condone or engage in discrimination based on age, color, culture, disability, ethnic group, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, or socioeconomic status. (See C.5.a., C.5.b., and D.1.i.)
- b. **Respecting Differences.** Counselors will actively attempt to understand the diverse cultural backgrounds of the clients with whom they work. This includes, but is not limited to, learning how the counselor's own cultural/ethnic/racial identity impacts her or his values and beliefs about the counseling process. (See E.8. and F.2.i.)

A.3. Client Rights

- a. **Disclosure to Clients.** When counseling is initiated, and throughout the counseling process as necessary, counselors inform clients of the purposes, goals, techniques, procedures, limitations, potential risks, and benefits of services to be performed, and other pertinent information. Counselors take steps to ensure that clients understand the implications of diagnosis, the intended use of tests and reports, fees, and billing arrangements. Clients have the right to expect confidentiality and to be provided with an explanation of its limitations, including supervision and/or treatment team professionals;

to obtain clear information about their case records; to participate in the ongoing counseling plans; and to refuse any recommended services and be advised of the consequences of such refusal. (See E.5.a. and G.2.)

b. Freedom of Choice. Counselors offer clients the freedom to choose whether to enter into a counseling relationship and to determine which professional(s) will provide counseling. Restrictions that limit choices of clients are fully explained. (See A.1.c.)

c. Inability to Give Consent. When counseling minors or persons unable to give voluntary informed consent, counselors act in these clients' best interests. (See B.3.)

A.4. Clients Served by Others

If a client is receiving services from another mental health professional, counselors, with client consent, inform the professional persons already involved and develop clear agreements to avoid confusion and conflict for the client. (See C.6.c.)

A.5. Personal Needs and Values

a. Personal Needs. In the counseling relationship, counselors are aware of the intimacy and responsibilities inherent in the counseling relationship, maintain respect for clients, and avoid actions that seek to meet their personal needs at the expense of clients.

b. Personal Values. Counselors are aware of their own values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors and how these apply in a diverse society, and avoid imposing their values on clients. (See C.5.a.)

A.6. Dual Relationships

a. Avoid When Possible. Counselors are aware of their influential positions with respect to clients, and they avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of clients. Counselors make every effort to avoid dual relationships with clients that could impair professional judgment or increase the risk of harm to clients. (Examples of such relationships include, but are not limited to, familial, social, financial, business, or close personal relationships with clients.) When a dual relationship cannot be avoided, counselors take appropriate professional precautions such as informed consent, consultation, supervision, and documentation to ensure that judgment is not impaired and no exploitation occurs. (See F.1.b.)

b. Superior/Subordinate Relationships. Counselors do not accept as client's superiors or subordinates with whom they have administrative, supervisory, or evaluative relationships.

A.7. Sexual Intimacies with Clients

a. Current Clients. Counselors do not have any type of sexual intimacies with clients and do not counsel persons with whom they have had a sexual relationship.

b. Former Clients. Counselors do not engage in sexual intimacies with former clients within a minimum of 2 years after terminating the counseling relationship. Counselors who engage in such relationship after 2 years following termination have the responsibility to examine and document thoroughly that such relations did not have an exploitative nature, based on factors such as duration of counseling, amount of time since counseling, termination circumstances, client's personal history and mental status, adverse impact on the client, and actions by the counselor suggesting a plan to initiate a

sexual relationship with the client after termination.

A.8. Multiple Clients

When counselors agree to provide counseling services to two or more persons who have a relationship (such as husband and wife, or parents and children), counselors clarify at the outset which person or persons are clients and the nature of the relationships they will have with each involved person. If it becomes apparent that counselors may be called upon to perform potentially conflicting roles, they clarify, adjust, or withdraw from roles appropriately. (See B.2. and B.4.d.)

A.9. Group Work

- a. Screening. Counselors screen prospective group counseling/therapy participants. To the extent possible, counselors select members whose needs and goals are compatible with goals of the group, who will not impede the group process, and whose well-being will not be jeopardized by the group experience.
- b. Protecting Clients. In a group setting, counselors take reasonable precautions to protect clients from physical or psychological trauma.

A.10. Fees and Bartering (See D.3.a. and D.3.b.)

- a. Advance Understanding. Counselors clearly explain to clients, prior to entering the counseling relationship, all financial arrangements related to professional services including the use of collection agencies or legal measures for nonpayment. (A.11.c.)
- b. Establishing Fees. In establishing fees for professional counseling services, counselors consider the financial status of clients and locality. In the event that the established fee structure is inappropriate for a client, assistance is provided in attempting to find comparable services of acceptable cost. (See A.10.d., D.3.a., and D.3.b.)
- c. Bartering Discouraged. Counselors ordinarily refrain from accepting goods or services from clients in return for counseling services because such arrangements create inherent potential for conflicts, exploitation, and distortion of the professional relationship. Counselors may participate in bartering only if the relationship is not exploitative, if the client requests it, if a clear written contract is established, and if such arrangements are an accepted practice among professionals in the community. (See A.6.a.)
- d. Pro Bono Service. Counselors contribute to society by devoting a portion of their professional activity to services for which there is little or no financial return (pro bono).

A.11. Termination and Referral

- a. Abandonment Prohibited. Counselors do not abandon or neglect clients in counseling. Counselors assist in making appropriate arrangements for the continuation of treatment, when necessary, during interruptions such as vacations, and following termination.
- b. Inability to Assist Clients. If counselors determine an inability to be of professional assistance to clients, they avoid entering or immediately terminate a counseling relationship. Counselors are knowledgeable about referral resources and suggest appropriate alternatives. If clients decline the suggested referral, counselors should discontinue the relationship.
- c. Appropriate Termination. Counselors terminate a counseling relationship, securing client agreement when possible, when it is reasonably clear that the client is no longer

benefiting, when services are no longer required, when counseling no longer serves the client's needs or interests, when clients do not pay fees charged, or when agency or institution limits do not allow provision of further counseling services. (See A.10.b. and C.2.g.)

A.12. Computer Technology

- a. Use of Computers. When computer applications are used in counseling services, counselors ensure that (1) the client is intellectually, emotionally, and physically capable of using the computer application; (2) the computer application is appropriate for the needs of the client; (3) the client understands the purpose and operation of the computer applications; and (4) a follow-up of client use of a computer application is provided to correct possible misconceptions, discover inappropriate use, and assess subsequent needs.
- b. Explanation of Limitations. Counselors ensure that clients are provided information as a part of the counseling relationship that adequately explains the limitations of computer technology.
- c. Access to Computer Applications. Counselors provide for equal access to computer applications in counseling services.

Section B: Confidentiality

B.1. Right to Privacy

- a. Respect for Privacy. Counselors respect their clients right to privacy and avoid illegal and unwarranted disclosures of confidential information. (See A.3.a. and B.6.a.)
- b. Client Waiver. The right to privacy may be waived by the client or his or her legally recognized representative.
- c. Exceptions. The general requirement that counselors keep information confidential does not apply when disclosure is required to prevent clear and imminent danger to the client or others or when legal requirements demand that confidential information be revealed. Counselors consult with other professionals when in doubt as to the validity of an exception.
- d. Contagious, Fatal Diseases. A counselor who receives information confirming that a client has a disease commonly known to be both communicable and fatal is justified in disclosing information to an identifiable third party, who by his or her relationship with the client is at a high risk of contracting the disease. Prior to making a disclosure the counselor should ascertain that the client has not already informed the third party about his or her disease and that the client is not intending to inform the third party in the immediate future. (See B.1.c and B.1.f.)
- e. Court-Ordered Disclosure. When court ordered to release confidential information without a client's permission, counselor's request to the court that the disclosure not be required due to potential harm to the client or counseling relationship. (See B.1.c.)
- f. Minimal Disclosure. When circumstances require the disclosure of confidential information, only essential information is revealed. To the extent possible, clients are informed before confidential information is disclosed.
- g. Explanation of Limitations. When counseling is initiated and throughout the counseling process as necessary, counselors inform clients of the limitations of confidentiality and identify foreseeable situations in which confidentiality must be

breached.

h. Subordinates. Counselors make every effort to ensure that privacy and confidentiality of clients are maintained by subordinates including employees, supervisees, clerical assistants, and volunteers. (See B.1.a.)

i. Treatment Teams. If client treatment will involve a continued review by a treatment team, the client will be informed of the team's existence and composition.

B.2. Groups and Families

a. Group Work. In group work, counselors clearly define confidentiality and the parameters for the specific group being entered, explain its importance, and discuss the difficulties related to confidentiality involved in group work. The fact that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed is clearly communicated to group members.

b. Family Counseling. In family counseling, information about one family member cannot be disclosed to another member without permission. Counselors protect the privacy rights of each family member. (See A.8., B.3., and B.4.d.)

B.3. Minor or Incompetent Clients

When counseling clients who are minors or individuals who are unable to give voluntary, informed consent, parents or guardians may be included in the counseling process as appropriate. Counselors act in the best interests of clients and take measures to safeguard confidentiality. (See A.3.c.)

B.4. Records

a. Requirement of Records. Counselors maintain records necessary for rendering professional services to their clients and as required by laws, regulations, or agency or institution procedures.

b. Confidentiality of Records. Counselors are responsible for securing the safety and confidentiality of any counseling records they create, maintain, transfer, or destroy whether the records are written, taped, computerized, or stored in any other medium.

c. Permission to Record or Observe. Counselors obtain permission from clients prior to electronically recording or observing sessions. (See A.3.a.)

d. Client Access. Counselors recognize that counseling records are kept for the benefit of clients, and therefore provide access to records and copies of records when requested by competent clients, unless the records contain information that may be misleading and detrimental to the client. In situations involving multiple clients, access to records is limited to those parts of records that do not include confidential information related to another client. (See A.8., B.1.a., and B.2.b.)

e. Disclosure or Transfer. Counselors obtain written permission from clients to disclose or transfer records to legitimate third parties unless exceptions to confidentiality exist as listed in Section B.1. Steps are taken to ensure that receivers of counseling records are sensitive to their confidential nature.

B.5. Research and Training

a. Data Disguise Required. Use of data derived from counseling relationships for purposes of training, research, or publication is confined to content that is disguised to ensure the anonymity of the individuals involved. (See B.1.g. and G.3.d.)

b. Agreement for Identification. Identification of a client in a presentation or publication is permissible only when the client has reviewed the material and has agreed to its presentation or publication. (See G.3.d.)

B.6. Consultation

a. Respect for Privacy. Information obtained in a consulting relationship is discussed for professional purposes only with persons clearly concerned with the case. Written and oral reports present data germane to the purposes of the consultation, and every effort is made to protect client identity and avoid undue invasion of privacy.

b. Cooperating Agencies. Before sharing information, counselors make efforts to ensure that there are defined policies in other agencies serving the counselor's clients that effectively protect the confidentiality of information.

Section C: Professional Responsibility

C.1. Standards Knowledge

Counselors have a responsibility to read, understand, and follow the Code of Ethics and the Standards of Practice.

C.2. Professional Competence

a. Boundaries of Competence. Counselors practice only within the boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training, supervised experience, state and national professional credentials, and appropriate professional experience. Counselors will demonstrate a commitment to gain knowledge, personal awareness, sensitivity, and skills pertinent to working with a diverse client population.

b. New Specialty Areas of Practice. Counselors practice in specialty areas new to them only after appropriate education, training, and supervised experience. While developing skills in new specialty areas, counselors take steps to ensure the competence of their work and to protect others from possible harm.

c. Qualified for Employment. Counselors accept employment only for positions for which they are qualified by education, training, supervised experience, state and national professional credentials, and appropriate professional experience. Counselors hire for professional counseling positions only individuals who are qualified and competent.

d. Monitor Effectiveness. Counselors continually monitor their effectiveness as professionals and take steps to improve when necessary. Counselors in private practice take reasonable steps to seek out peer supervision to evaluate their efficacy as counselors.

e. Ethical Issues Consultation. Counselors take reasonable steps to consult with other counselors or related professionals when they have questions regarding their ethical obligations or professional practice. (See H.1.)

f. Continuing Education. Counselors recognize the need for continuing education to maintain a reasonable level of awareness of current scientific and professional information in their fields of activity. They take steps to maintain competence in the skills they use, are open to new procedures, and keep current with the diverse and/or special populations with whom they work.

g. Impairment. Counselors refrain from offering or accepting professional services when their physical, mental, or emotional problems are likely to harm a client or others. They

are alert to the signs of impairment, seek assistance for problems, and, if necessary, limit, suspend, or terminate their professional responsibilities. (See A.11.c.)

C.3. Advertising and Soliciting Clients

- a. **Accurate Advertising.** There are no restrictions on advertising by counselors except those that can be specifically justified to protect the public from deceptive practices. Counselors advertise or represent their services to the public by identifying their credentials in an accurate manner that is not false, misleading, deceptive, or fraudulent. Counselors may only advertise the highest degree earned which is in counseling or a closely related field from a college or university that was accredited when the degree was awarded by one of the regional accrediting bodies recognized by the Council on Post-secondary Accreditation.
- b. **Testimonials.** Counselors who use testimonials do not solicit them from clients or other persons who, because of their particular circumstances, may be vulnerable to undue influence.
- c. **Statements by Others.** Counselors make reasonable efforts to ensure that statements made by others about them or the profession of counseling are accurate.
- d. **Recruiting Through Employment.** Counselors do not use their places of employment or institutional affiliation to recruit or gain clients, supervisees, or consultees for their private practices. (See C.5.e.)
- e. **Products and Training Advertisements.** Counselors who develop products related to their profession or conduct workshops or training events ensure that the advertisements concerning these products or events are accurate and disclose adequate information for consumers to make informed choices.
- f. **Promoting to Those Served.** Counselors do not use counseling, teaching, training, or supervisory relationships to promote their products or training events in a manner that is deceptive or would exert undue influence on individuals who may be vulnerable. Counselors may adopt textbooks they have authored for instruction purposes.
- g. **Professional Association Involvement.** Counselors actively participate in local, state, and national associations that foster the development and improvement of counseling.

C.4. Credentials

- a. **Credentials Claimed.** Counselors claim or imply only professional credentials possessed and are responsible for correcting any known misrepresentations of their credentials by others. Professional credentials include graduate degrees in counseling or closely related mental health fields, accreditation of graduate programs, national voluntary certifications, government-issued certifications or licenses, ACA professional membership, or any other credential that might indicate to the public specialized knowledge or expertise in counseling.
- b. **ACA Professional Membership.** ACA professional members may announce to the public their membership status. Regular members may not announce their ACA membership in a manner that might imply they are credentialed counselors.
- c. **Credential Guidelines.** Counselors follow the guidelines for use of credentials that have been established by the entities that issue the credentials.
- d. **Misrepresentation of Credentials.** Counselors do not attribute more to their credentials than the credentials represent, and do not imply that other counselors are not qualified

because they do not possess certain credentials.

e. **Doctoral Degrees From Other Fields.** Counselors who hold a master's degree in counseling or a closely related mental health field, but hold a doctoral degree from other than counseling or a closely related field, do not use the title "Dr." in their practices and do not announce to the public in relation to their practice or status as a counselor that they hold a doctorate.

C.5. Public Responsibility

a. **Nondiscrimination.** Counselors do not discriminate against clients, students, or supervisees in a manner that has a negative impact based on their age, color, culture, disability, ethnic group, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status, or for any other reason. (See A.2.a.)

b. **Sexual Harassment.** Counselors do not engage in sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is defined as sexual solicitation, physical advances, or verbal or nonverbal conduct that is sexual in nature, that occurs in connection with professional activities or roles, and that either (1) is unwelcome, is offensive, or creates a hostile workplace environment, and counselors know or are told this; or (2) is sufficiently severe or intense to be perceived as harassment to a reasonable person in the context. Sexual harassment can consist of a single intense or severe act or multiple persistent or pervasive acts.

c. **Reports to Third Parties.** Counselors are accurate, honest, and unbiased in reporting their professional activities and judgments to appropriate third parties including courts, health insurance companies, those who are the recipients of evaluation reports, and others. (See B.1.g.)

d. **Media Presentations.** When counselors provide advice or comment by means of public lectures, demonstrations, radio or television programs, prerecorded tapes, printed articles, mailed material, or other media, they take reasonable precautions to ensure that (1) the statements are based on appropriate professional counseling literature and practice; (2) the statements are otherwise consistent with the Code of Ethics and the Standards of Practice; and (3) the recipients of the information are not encouraged to infer that a professional counseling relationship has been established. (See C.6.b.)

e. **Unjustified Gains.** Counselors do not use their professional positions to seek or receive unjustified personal gains, sexual favors, unfair advantage, or unearned goods or services. (See C.3.d.)

C.6. Responsibility to Other Professionals

a. **Different Approaches.** Counselors are respectful of approaches to professional counseling that differ from their own. Counselors know and take into account the traditions and practices of other professional groups with which they work.

b. **Personal Public Statements.** When making personal statements in a public context, counselors clarify that they are speaking from their personal perspectives and that they are not speaking on behalf of all counselors or the profession. (See C.5.d.)

c. **Clients Served by Others.** When counselors learn that their clients are in a professional relationship with another mental health professional, they request release from clients to inform the other professionals and strive to establish positive and collaborative professional relationships. (See A.4.)

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<http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=173>

**American School Counselor Association
Ethical Standards for School Counselors
Revised June 26, 2004**

Preamble

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is a professional organization whose members are certified/licensed in school counseling with unique qualifications and skills to address the academic, personal/social and career development needs of all students. Professional school counselors are advocates, leaders, collaborators and consultants who create opportunities for equity in access and success in educational opportunities by connecting their programs to the mission of schools and subscribing to the following tenets of professional responsibility:

- Each person has the right to be respected, be treated with dignity and have access to a comprehensive school counseling program that advocates for and affirms all students from diverse populations regardless of ethnic/racial status, age, economic status, special needs, English as a second language or other language group, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity/expression, family type, religious/spiritual identity and appearance.
- Each person has the right to receive the information and support needed to move toward self-direction and self-development and affirmation within one's group identities, with special care being given to students who have historically not received adequate educational services: students of color, low socio-economic students, students with disabilities and students with no dominant language backgrounds.
- Each person has the right to understand the full magnitude and meaning of his/her educational choices and how those choices will affect future opportunities.
- Each person has the right to privacy and thereby the right to expect the counselor-student relationship to comply with all laws, policies and ethical standards pertaining to confidentiality in the school setting.

In this document, ASCA specifies the principles of ethical behavior necessary to maintain the high standards of integrity, leadership and professionalism among its members. The Ethical Standards for School Counselors were developed to clarify the nature of ethical responsibilities held in common by school counseling professionals. The purposes of this document are to:

- Serve as a guide for the ethical practices of all professional school counselors regardless of level, area, population served or membership in this professional association;

- Provide self-appraisal and peer evaluations regarding counselor responsibilities to students, parents/guardians, colleagues and professional associates, schools, communities and the counseling profession; and
- Inform those served by the school counselor of acceptable counselor practices and expected professional behavior.

A.1. Responsibilities to Students

The professional school counselor:

- Has a primary obligation to the student, who is to be treated with respect as a unique individual.
- Is concerned with the educational, academic, career, personal and social needs and encourages the maximum development of every student.
- Respects the student's values and beliefs and does not impose the counselor's personal values.
- Is knowledgeable of laws, regulations and policies relating to students and strives to protect and inform students regarding their rights.

A.2. Confidentiality

The professional school counselor:

- Informs students of the purposes, goals, techniques and rules of procedure under which they may receive counseling at or before the time when the counseling relationship is entered. Disclosure notice includes the limits of confidentiality such as the possible necessity for consulting with other professionals, privileged communication, and legal or authoritative restraints. The meaning and limits of confidentiality are defined in developmentally appropriate terms to students.
- Keeps information confidential unless disclosure is required to prevent clear and imminent danger to the student or others or when legal requirements demand that confidential information be revealed. Counselors will consult with appropriate professionals when in doubt as to the validity of an exception.
- In absence of state legislation expressly forbidding disclosure, considers the ethical responsibility to provide information to an identified third party who, by his/her relationship with the student, is at a high risk of contracting a disease that is commonly known to be communicable and fatal. Disclosure requires satisfaction of all of the following conditions:
 - Student identifies partner or the partner is highly identifiable
 - Counselor recommends the student notify partner and refrain from further high-risk behavior
 - Student refuses

- Counselor informs the student of the intent to notify the partner
 - Counselor seeks legal consultation as to the legalities of informing the partner
- d. Requests of the court that disclosure not be required when the release of confidential information may potentially harm a student or the counseling relationship.
- e. Protects the confidentiality of students' records and releases personal data in accordance with prescribed laws and school policies. Student information stored and transmitted electronically is treated with the same care as traditional student records.
- f. Protects the confidentiality of information received in the counseling relationship as specified by federal and state laws, written policies and applicable ethical standards. Such information is only to be revealed to others with the informed consent of the student, consistent with the counselor's ethical obligation.
- g. Recognizes his/her primary obligation for confidentiality is to the student but balances that obligation with an understanding of the legal and inherent rights of parents/guardians to be the guiding voice in their children's lives.

A.3. Counseling Plans

The professional school counselor:

- a. Provides students with a comprehensive school counseling program that includes a strong emphasis on working jointly with all students to develop academic and career goals.
- b. Advocates for counseling plans supporting students right to choose from the wide array of options when they leave secondary education. Such plans will be regularly reviewed to update students regarding critical information they need to make informed decisions.

A.4. Dual Relationships

The professional school counselor:

- a. Avoids dual relationships that might impair his/her objectivity and increase the risk of harm to the student (e.g., counseling one's family members, close friends or associates). If a dual relationship is unavoidable, the counselor is responsible for taking action to eliminate or reduce the potential for harm. Such safeguards might include informed consent, consultation, supervision and documentation.
- b. Avoids dual relationships with school personnel that might infringe on the integrity of the counselor/student relationship

A.5. Appropriate Referrals

The professional school counselor:

- a. Makes referrals when necessary or appropriate to outside resources. Appropriate

referrals may necessitate informing both parents/guardians and students of applicable resources and making proper plans for transitions with minimal interruption of services. Students retain the right to discontinue the counseling relationship at any time.

A.6. Group Work

The professional school counselor:

- a. Screens prospective group members and maintains an awareness of participants' needs and goals in relation to the goals of the group. The counselor takes reasonable precautions to protect members from physical and psychological harm resulting from interaction within the group.
- b. Notifies parents/guardians and staff of group participation if the counselor deems it appropriate and if consistent with school board policy or practice.
- c. Establishes clear expectations in the group setting and clearly states that confidentiality in group counseling cannot be guaranteed. Given the developmental and chronological ages of minors in schools, the counselor recognizes the tenuous nature of confidentiality for minors renders some topics inappropriate for group work in a school setting.
- d. Follows up with group members and documents proceedings as appropriate.

A.7. Danger to Self or Others

The professional school counselor:

- a. Informs parents/guardians or appropriate authorities when the student's condition indicates a clear and imminent danger to the student or others. This is to be done after careful deliberation and, where possible, after consultation with other counseling professionals.
- b. Will attempt to minimize threat to a student and may choose to 1) inform the student of actions to be taken, 2) involve the student in a three-way communication with parents/guardians when breaching confidentiality or 3) allow the student to have input as to how and to whom the breach will be made.

A.8. Student Records

The professional school counselor:

- a. Maintains and secures records necessary for rendering professional services to the student as required by laws, regulations, institutional procedures and confidentiality guidelines.
- b. Keeps sole-possession records separate from students' educational records in keeping with state laws.

c. Recognizes the limits of sole-possession records and understands these records are a memory aid for the creator and in absence of privilege communication may be subpoenaed and may become educational records when they 1) are shared with others in verbal or written form, 2) include information other than professional opinion or personal observations and/or 3) are made accessible to others.

d. Establishes a reasonable timeline for purging sole-possession records or case notes. Suggested guidelines include shredding sole possession records when the student transitions to the next level, transfers to another school or graduates. Careful discretion and deliberation should be applied before destroying sole-possession records that may be needed by a court of law such as notes on child abuse, suicide, sexual harassment or violence.

A.9. Evaluation, Assessment and Interpretation

The professional school counselor:

- a. Adheres to all professional standards regarding selecting, administering and interpreting assessment measures and only utilizes assessment measures that are within the scope of practice for school counselors.
- b. Seeks specialized training regarding the use of electronically based testing programs in administering, scoring and interpreting that may differ from that required in more traditional assessments.
- c. Considers confidentiality issues when utilizing evaluative or assessment instruments and electronically based programs.
- d. Provides interpretation of the nature, purposes, results and potential impact of assessment/evaluation measures in language the student(s) can understand.
- e. Monitors the use of assessment results and interpretations, and takes reasonable steps to prevent others from misusing the information.
- f. Uses caution when utilizing assessment techniques, making evaluations and interpreting the performance of populations not represented in the norm group on which an instrument is standardized.
- g. Assesses the effectiveness of his/her program in having an impact on students' academic, career and personal/social development through accountability measures especially examining efforts to close achievement, opportunity and attainment gaps.

A.10. Technology

The professional school counselor:

- a. Promotes the benefits of and clarifies the limitations of various appropriate technological applications. The counselor promotes technological applications (1) that are

appropriate for the student's individual needs, (2) that the student understands how to use and (3) for which follow-up counseling assistance is provided.

b. Advocates for equal access to technology for all students, especially those historically underserved.

c. Takes appropriate and reasonable measures for maintaining confidentiality of student information and educational records stored or transmitted over electronic media including although not limited to fax, electronic mail and instant messaging.

d. While working with students on a computer or similar technology, takes reasonable and appropriate measures to protect students from objectionable and/or harmful online material.

e. Who is engaged in the delivery of services involving technologies such as the telephone, videoconferencing and the Internet takes responsible steps to protect students and others from harm.

A.11. Student Peer Support Program

The professional school counselor:

Has unique responsibilities when working with student-assistance programs. The school counselor is responsible for the welfare of students participating in peer-to-peer programs under his/her direction.

B. Responsibilities to Parents/Guardians

B.1. Parent Rights and Responsibilities

The professional school counselor:

a. Respects the rights and responsibilities of parents/guardians for their children and endeavors to establish, as appropriate, a collaborative relationship with parents/guardians to facilitate the student's maximum development.

b. Adheres to laws, local guidelines and ethical standards of practice when assisting parents/guardians experiencing family difficulties that interfere with the student's effectiveness and welfare.

c. Respects the confidentiality of parents/guardians.

d. Is sensitive to diversity among families and recognizes that all parents/guardians, custodial and non-custodial, are vested with certain rights and responsibilities for the welfare of their children by virtue of their role and according to law.

B.2. Parents/Guardians and Confidentiality

The professional school counselor:

- a. Informs parents/guardians of the counselor's role with emphasis on the confidential nature of the counseling relationship between the counselor and student.
- b. Recognizes that working with minors in a school setting may require counselors to collaborate with students' parents/guardians.
- c. Provides parents/guardians with accurate, comprehensive and relevant information in an objective and caring manner, as is appropriate and consistent with ethical responsibilities to the student.
- d. Makes reasonable efforts to honor the wishes of parents/guardians concerning information regarding the student, and in cases of divorce or separation exercises a good-faith effort to keep both parents informed with regard to critical information with the exception of a court order.

C. Responsibilities to Colleagues and Professional Associates

C.1. Professional Relationships

The professional school counselor:

- a. Establishes and maintains professional relationships with faculty, staff and administration to facilitate an optimum counseling program.
- b. Treats colleagues with professional respect, courtesy and fairness. The qualifications, views and findings of colleagues are represented to accurately reflect the image of competent professionals.
- c. Is aware of and utilizes related professionals, organizations and other resources to whom the student may be referred.

C.2. Sharing Information with Other Professionals

The professional school counselor:

- a. Promotes awareness and adherence to appropriate guidelines regarding confidentiality, the distinction between public and private information and staff consultation.
- b. Provides professional personnel with accurate, objective, concise and meaningful data necessary to adequately evaluate, counsel and assist the student.
- c. If a student is receiving services from another counselor or other mental health professional, the counselor, with student and/or parent/guardian consent, will inform the other professional and develop clear agreements to avoid confusion and conflict for the student.

d. Is knowledgeable about release of information and parental rights in sharing information.

D. Responsibilities to the School and Community

D.1. Responsibilities to the School

The professional school counselor:

- a. Supports and protects the educational program against any infringement not in students' best interest.
- b. Informs appropriate officials in accordance with school policy of conditions that may be potentially disruptive or damaging to the school's mission, personnel and property while honoring the confidentiality between the student and counselor.
- c. Is knowledgeable and supportive of the school's mission and connects his/her program to the school's mission.
- d. Delineates and promotes the counselor's role and function in meeting the needs of those served. Counselors will notify appropriate officials of conditions that may limit or curtail their effectiveness in providing programs and services.
- e. Accepts employment only for positions for which he/she is qualified by education, training, supervised experience, state and national professional credentials and appropriate professional experience.
- f. Advocates that administrators hire only qualified and competent individuals for professional counseling positions.
- g. Assists in developing: (1) curricular and environmental conditions appropriate for the school and community, (2) educational procedures and programs to meet students' developmental needs and (3) a systematic evaluation process for comprehensive, developmental, standards-based school counseling programs, services and personnel. The counselor is guided by the findings of the evaluation data in planning programs and services.

D.2. Responsibility to the Community

The professional school counselor:

- a. Collaborates with agencies, organizations and individuals in the community in the best interest of students and without regard to personal reward or remuneration.
- b. Extends his/her influence and opportunity to deliver a comprehensive school counseling program to all students by collaborating with community resources for student success.

E. Responsibilities to Self

E.1. Professional Competence

The professional school counselor:

- a. Functions within the boundaries of individual professional competence and accepts responsibility for the consequences of his/her actions.
- b. Monitors personal well-being and effectiveness and does not participate in any activity that may lead to inadequate professional services or harm to a student.
- c. Strives through personal initiative to maintain professional competence including technological literacy and to keep abreast of professional information. Professional and personal growths are ongoing throughout the counselor's career.

E.2. Diversity

The professional school counselor:

- a. Affirms the diversity of students, staff and families.
- b. Expands and develops awareness of his/her own attitudes and beliefs affecting cultural values and biases and strives to attain cultural competence.
- c. Possesses knowledge and understanding about how oppression, racism, discrimination and stereotyping affect her/him personally and professionally.
- d. Acquires educational, consultation and training experiences to improve awareness, knowledge, skills and effectiveness in working with diverse populations: ethnic/racial status, age, economic status, special needs, ESL or ELL, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity/expression, family type, religious/spiritual identity and appearance.

F. Responsibilities to the Profession

F.1. Professionalism

The professional school counselor:

- a. Accepts the policies and procedures for handling ethical violations as a result of maintaining membership in the American School Counselor Association.
- b. Conducts herself/himself in such a manner as to advance individual ethical practice and the profession.
- c. Conducts appropriate research and report findings in a manner consistent with acceptable educational and psychological research practices. The counselor advocates for the protection of the individual student's identity when using data for research or program planning.

d. Adheres to ethical standards of the profession, other official policy statements, such as ASCA's position statements, role statement and the ASCA National Model, and relevant statutes established by federal, state and local governments, and when these are in conflict works responsibly for change.

e. Clearly distinguishes between statements and actions made as a private individual and those made as a representative of the school counseling profession.

f. Does not use his/her professional position to recruit or gain clients, consult fees for his/her private practice or to seek and receive unjustified personal gains, unfair advantage, inappropriate relationships or unearned goods or services.

F.2. Contribution to the Profession

The professional school counselor:

a. Actively participates in local, state and national associations fostering the development and improvement of school counseling.

b. Contributes to the development of the profession through the sharing of skills, ideas and expertise with colleagues.

c. Provides support and mentoring to novice professionals.

G. Maintenance of Standards

Ethical behavior among professional school counselors, association members and nonmembers, is expected at all times. When there exists serious doubt as to the ethical behavior of colleagues or if counselors are forced to work in situations or abide by policies that do not reflect the standards as outlined in these Ethical Standards for School Counselors, the counselor is obligated to take appropriate action to rectify the condition. The following procedure may serve as a guide:

1. The counselor should consult confidentially with a professional colleague to discuss the nature of a complaint to see if the professional colleague views the situation as an ethical violation.

2. When feasible, the counselor should directly approach the colleague whose behavior is in question to discuss the complaint and seek resolution.

3. If resolution is not forthcoming at the personal level, the counselor shall utilize the channels established within the school, school district, the state school counseling association and ASCA's Ethics Committee.

4. If the matter still remains unresolved, referral for review and appropriate action should be made to the Ethics Committees in the following sequence:

- state school counselor association
- American School Counselor Association

5. The ASCA Ethics Committee is responsible for:

- educating and consulting with the membership regarding ethical standards
- periodically reviewing and recommending changes in code
- receiving and processing questions to clarify the application of such standards; Questions must be submitted in writing to the ASCA Ethics chair.
- handling complaints of alleged violations of the ethical standards. At the national level, complaints should be submitted in writing to the ASCA Ethics Committee, c/o the Executive Director, American School Counselor Association, 1101 King St., Suite 625, Alexandria, Virginia 22314.

Web Sites:

Professional Organization Membership

Professional Liability Insurance

**Check websites for current application
forms and prices.**

National Counseling Association

- American Counseling Association (ACA) membership form:
<http://www.counseling.org/>
- American Counseling Association (ACA) Professional Liability Insurance
<http://www.acait.com/>

State Counseling Association

- Virginia Counselor Association (VCA) membership form:
<http://www.vcacounselors.org/>
- Virginia Counselor Association (VCA) Professional Liability Insurance
VCA uses ACA's insurance carrier: <http://www.acait.com/>

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