

Appropriate Duties



THERE SEEMS TO BE AN ONGOING STRUGGLE WITH PUTTING SCHOOL COUNSELORS IN ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES, HAVING THEM DEAL WITH DISCIPLINARY ISSUES OR EVEN EVALUATIVE ISSUES WITH TEACHERS. HOW DO I REFUSE TO DO THESE DUTIES WITHOUT LOOKING LIKE I'M NOT A TEAM PLAYER?

First and foremost, administrators who put their school counselors in quasi-administrative positions are often acting on historical role definition based on how their predecessors utilized the role of the school counselor. You need to educate your administrators and the faculty about the role of today's school counselor. Doing a presentation for the administrative team, faculty, parents and other stakeholders regarding current research on school counselor effectiveness and the ASCA National Model will go a long way in addressing the misuse of your time.

Check the Careers/Roles section of the ASCA Web site and the ASCA Position Statements for helpful materials to use in your presentations about the role of the school counselor.

Self-harm



ONE OF MY STUDENTS HAS RECENTLY SHARED WITH ME THAT SHE OFTEN CUTS HERSELF. SHOULD I CONTACT HER PARENTS IMMEDIATELY, OR SHOULD I MEET WITH HER A FEW TIMES FIRST TO ESTABLISH TRUST AND TRY TO GET HER TO EITHER TELL HER PARENTS HERSELF OR ALLOW ME TO DO SO? FOR ME, THE ISSUE IS NOT AS BLACK AND WHITE AS I WISH IT WERE.

Black and white doesn't always fit for ethical decision-making. In this case, you'll need to assess her cutting behaviors and intentions. If your assessment indicates her intentions are suicidal ideation, of course you should take immediate action and inform her parents and develop a crisis plan. If her actions don't indicate imminent danger, then it is important to understand her cutting conduct and assess the level of her addiction to this behavior. The relationship you have developed with the student may be the open door to guide her to disclosure of this behavior to her parents.

Dual Relationships



I WORK AS THE ONLY SCHOOL COUNSELOR IN A SMALL MIDDLE SCHOOL. NEXT YEAR, MY DAUGHTER WILL ENTER MY SCHOOL. HOW DO I PROVIDE SCHOOL COUNSELING SERVICES TO MY OWN CHILD?

Counseling your own family member creates an unethical dual relationship. However, the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors state, "If a dual relationship is unavoidable, the school counselor is responsible for taking action to eliminate or reduce the potential for harm to the student through the use of safeguards, which might include informed consent, consultation, supervision and documentation" (A.4.a.).

Say, for example, you provide your daughter information on career development and academic issues. In those cases, you might want to explain what you would say as a school counselor as well as your opinion as a parent. You will want to avoid personal counseling. If your daughter would benefit from personal counseling, you'll need to find an outside source. Consultation will be necessary as you navigate the next few years.



ARE THERE ETHICAL ISSUES WITH HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS WHO ALSO MAINTAIN AN INDEPENDENT COLLEGE COUNSELING BUSINESS OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL HOURS? WHAT IF THEY ONLY WORK WITH STUDENTS OUTSIDE THEIR HOME DISTRICT?

Having a private college counseling business has the potential to create unethical dual relationships, yet the business can be maintained with careful consideration of ethical guidelines. The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors state that school counselors provide students with opportunities to explore post-secondary opportunities and create post-secondary plans (A.3.c.). School counselors are also expected to avoid dual relationships that may impair objectivity (A.4.a.). Therefore, it would be unethical for a school counselor to refrain from providing services in the school setting but offer to provide those services to

students for a fee in a private practice.

The American Counseling Association Code of Ethics provides some additional guidance. Section C.3.d. states that counselors do not use their work sites to recruit clients for their private practices. Accordingly, if school counselors provide ethically mandated services to students, avoid harmful dual relationships with students and don't use their place of employment to recruit clients, a private practice won't violate ethical standards. Working with students in different school districts would seem to help the school counselor avoid ethical challenges.

Time Constraints



SITUATIONS SPILL OVER AND MAY EXTEND INTO AFTER-SCHOOL TIME OR THE OTHER HALF OF A DAY FOR A PART-TIME PERSON. ETHICALLY, WE NEED TO SEE SITUATIONS THROUGH UNTIL THEY ARE RESOLVED, BUT HOW DO YOU BALANCE THAT WITH TIME CONSTRAINTS? AM I ETHICALLY OBLIGATED TO WORK BEYOND MY NORMAL WORK HOURS TO DEAL WITH ISSUES WITH THE STUDENTS?

This situation identifies a common challenge for all school personnel. Typically teachers, administrators and school counselors can be found at school long after work hours have ended. Though a school counselor's contractual legal obligations can be quantified, the defined schedule creates a minimum obligation. The legal standard of care, acting reasonably under the circumstances, would also include school counselors working with students in crisis until the crisis is resolved.

As the question indicates, school counselors are ethically obligated to see situations through until they are resolved. If school counselors are consistently working well beyond school hours, the school counselor may wish to discuss the situation with an administrator and identify issues such as whether non-counseling activities can be delegated elsewhere or whether hiring additional school counseling personnel is necessary.