COLLABORATION and CONSULTATION
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A. Definition of Consultation

Consultation is the collaboration of professional school counselors with parents, students, teachers, administrators and other helping professionals, both within and outside the school setting. The goal of consultation is to empower those involved to assist students in the areas of personal/social, academic and/or career development.

(Inherent in the consultation process is adhering to the ethical standards of (our) the school counseling profession) Adhering to the ASCA/ACA Ethical Standards is inherent in the consultation process. Sound ethical practice requires all counselors to consult with peers or other professionals when presented with ethical dilemmas in professional practice (ACA Standard C2E/ASCA). The professional school counselor cannot and should not be expected to be the sole source of answers for successful interventions in assisting students. The process of consultation includes the professional school counselor seeking as well as providing support and information.
B. The Professional School Counselor and Consultation

Consultation, whether formal or informal, is a critical component in the work of school counselors. Counselors provide valuable contributions to the consultation process, including insights regarding students and their families, as well as facilitation and collaboration skills.

Consultation is a collaborative process. Consultation may provide information to the counselor about the student/family. At other times, individual participants will receive information from the counselor. This process increases the value and efficiency of the collaboration between different parties. When engaging in consultation, it is important to abide by the ASCA/ACA Ethical Standards at all times.

There are a number of different roles that the counselor may play in consultation such as advisor, advocate, collaborator, facilitator, and mediator. These roles and their importance will be described in section D.

Consultation takes place in a variety of settings. It does not always take place in a formal environment. Many times administrators, teachers, parents, students and other staff members may stop the counselor in the hallway to consult on issues of concern. Again, it is important to abide by the ASCA/ACA Ethical Standards, whether the consultation is formal or informal.

Documentation is critical for gauging the effectiveness of the interventions and achieving the desired outcomes. A list of suggestions related to the formal consultation process and a sample documentation record are provided in sections E and F. For more informal consultation, it may be helpful for the school counselor to carry a pen and small notebook and/or ask the person to e-mail their concerns.
C. Components of Effective Consultation

Effective consultation is grounded in interpersonal relationships. Developing relationships with peers, teachers, parents, students, and staff will help establish credibility. All interactions at school effect how the school counselor is perceived as a consultant.

Preparation prior to the consultation is essential, and may include:

- Completion of the Pre-Consultation Planning Guide (see Section E)
- Awareness of and sensitivity to the time commitment of the parties involved
- Informal discussions with relevant parties to promote consultation as a collaborative process, which highlights that all members have an interest in the outcome.
- Distribution of the meeting agenda to all participants prior to the consultation (see Section F)

Professional school counselors should meet with their administrators to determine what their roles will be in the consultation process. The level of support and involvement from administration may vary, but it is important to the consultation process. Therefore, the school counselor must advocate for collaboration in the school.

When the parties agree to participate in a formal consultation, it is important to have a meeting agenda (see Section F) and to begin and end the meeting on a positive note. It is essential to identify the contributions of all participants in the meeting and to recognize everyone involved for their time and effort. The meeting should also provide opportunities for participants to recognize others’ contributions, praise progress that has been made, identify student strengths and give everyone credit for what they have done.

There are times when participants (student, teacher, parent, administrator, etc.) might be resistant to the consultation process, due to a lack of information, ineffective prior experience with consultation, time, attitude, fear, and/or denial. Some may not agree that a meeting is necessary. At those times, it will be important for the professional school counselor to draw on his/her counseling skills to work toward compromise. If a formal meeting cannot be agreed upon, the counselor may need to collaborate with the interested parties and advocate for the best interest of the student. If communication has stalled, a counselor may consider gathering
information from each participant and developing a synopsis to ensure that the needs of the student are addressed.

Resistance can be minimized by preparing the participants on what to expect, how their information will be helpful and what their roles and responsibilities will be in achieving the desired outcome. A written agenda (see Section F) may help eliminate any anxiety, fear or resistance and facilitate the process.

It is always imperative to address the expectation of confidentiality prior to starting the consultation and to be sensitive to HIPAA, FERPA Guidelines, as well as ASCA/ACA Ethical Standards (see Section G). As in any group process, it may be helpful to establish group norms, such as:

- remain respectful
- speak one at a time
- listen attentively
- stay on topic
- begin and end on time

A copy of these expectations should be given to each participant, and reviewed before the meeting begins.

Active counseling skills facilitate the consultation process. Regardless of whether the professional school counselor is the facilitator or functioning in another role, their responsibility is to monitor the group process to ensure that participants continue to feel safe and the process remains productive. The professional school counselor can diffuse potential problems by paying attention to body language and taking the time to check in with participants to see how they are feeling about the meeting progress and the decisions that are being made. It is also important to summarize frequently and obtain agreement from all parties on what has been said and decided.

Follow up documentation, such as a completed consultation record (see Section F), should be provided for participants to review for accuracy. This documentation is a record of the decisions made, the parties responsible for implementation, and the timeline for evaluating outcomes.
D. The Professional School Counselor’s Role in Consultation
(Adapted from Cobia & Henderson, 2007)

The professional school counselor may play a number of different roles in
the consultation process such as advisor, advocate, collaborator,
facilitator, and mediator. A brief description of each follows.

Advisor—Offers recommendations, suggestions, and expertise
for direction/problem solving.

Advocate—Provides support; gathers information from outside
resources (e.g. mental health professionals, social
service agencies, physicians); speaks and acts on behalf
of a specific group, program, or individual.

Collaborator—Participates as a team member in defining,
designing and implementing a solution.

Facilitator—Leads and/or coordinates the consultation
process.

Mediator—Provides a framework for conflict resolution.

The tables on the following pages provide examples of how the various
consultation roles might be implemented. The professional school
counselor may be involved in one or more of the consultation roles in any
given situation.
D1. Personal/Social Development

A third grade boy comes to the counselor and reports that he is being rejected by his peers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td>Offer student suggestions on how to make friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate</td>
<td>Work with the teacher/administrator/other staff to increase friendship opportunities on behalf of the student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborator</td>
<td>Participate in discussions with parents and teachers about ways to help the student foster friendships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Conduct small group on friendships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediator</td>
<td>Meet with students to work toward a resolution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D2. Academic Development

A parent has called about her/his child, a seventh grade student. The student’s mid-quarter report shows two failing grades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td>Suggest study and/or organizational strategies that can be implemented at home; provide a resource list for tutoring to the parent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate</td>
<td>Assist the parent in communicating with the student’s teacher(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborator</td>
<td>Participate in a discussion of current student progress with the parent and teachers to develop a plan of action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Facilitate a discussion between the parent, student, and teachers regarding current student progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediator</td>
<td>Meet with student and teacher to address student progress.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D3. Career Development

A teacher/administrator approaches the counselor with her concern about a high school senior who has requested a letter of recommendation to a four year college that exceeds the student’s academic performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td>Offer the teacher/administrator strategies to explain to the student her concerns and suggest that she refer the student to the professional school counselor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate</td>
<td>Assist the teacher/administrator in gathering information about the student’s strengths in other areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborator</td>
<td>Work with teachers/administrator to develop a college planning workshop that includes how to evaluate post-secondary options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Develop an in-service for the faculty on writing letters of recommendation, including how to address challenging situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediator</td>
<td>Meet with teacher/administrator and student to discuss situation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
E. Pre-Consultation Planning Guide

Identify Concerns

Determine Meeting Location, Dates, and Times

Identify Possible Participants:
- Teachers
- Administrator
- Other Staff
- Parents/Guardians
- Student
- Internal Resources
- Outside Resources

Gather Information Needed:
- Student Data (follow local school board policies, state statutes, FERPA & HIPAA guidelines, and ASCA/ACA Ethical Standards [see Section G]):
  - Discipline Reports
  - Grades
  - Attendance
  - Cumulative File
  - Parent Contact Information
  - Teacher Observations
  - IEP/504 Information
  - Health Records
- Internal Resources (in-district):
  - Professional School Counselor
  - School Psychologist
  - School Social Worker
  - Special Education Services
  - Language Learners
  - School Nurse
  - School Resource Officer
  - Student Assistance Programming
- Outside Resources (community):
  - Mental Health
  - Social Services
  - Community Services
  - Educational Services

Utilize Meeting Agenda/Consultation Record (see Section F) to establish agenda and to document meeting.
F. Sample Meeting Agenda/Consultation Record

Provide agenda to all participants prior to meeting. Provide completed consultation record to all participants after the meeting.

Student:  Grade Level:  DOB:

Meeting Date:  Beginning Time:  Ending Time:

Participants:

Strengths Identified:

Issue/Concern:

Desired Outcome(s):

- Challenges (What might interfere with success of interventions?):

- Previous interventions (What has worked? What has not worked?):

Outcome Measurement:

Action Plan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post Meeting Responsibilities</th>
<th>Follow-Up Strategies</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Assess Progress Toward Student Outcome(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant Signatures ___________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

Provide copies of completed record to participants.
G. Consultation Resources

**Websites**
- [www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org)
  American School Counselor Association Ethical Standards & consultation resources
- [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org)
  American Counselor Association
- [www.moga.mo.gov/statutesearch/](http://www.moga.mo.gov/statutesearch/)
  Missouri statutes
- [www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/)
  Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
  Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- [http://www.motivationalinterview.org/](http://www.motivationalinterview.org/)
  Motivational Interviewing resources

**Books & Journal Citations**


*Disclaimer: These are examples of resources available. This is in no way an exhaustive list of all available resources.*
EXAMPLES

Effective Motivational Interviewing
Student: “I don’t have any friends and nobody will play with me at recess.”
Counselor: “Sounds like you’re tired of not having anybody to play with” (reflective listening)
Student: “Yes, I am.”
Counselor: “I bet that is really hard for you.” (affirmation)

Ineffective Response
Student: “I don’t have any friends and nobody will play with me at recess.”
Counselor: “Oh, that’s too bad honey, you can come to my office during recess.”

EXAMPLES

Effective Motivational Interviewing
Teacher: “This student has no chance of getting into Blank University. Why should I waste my time
writing this letter for her?”
Counselor: “I hear your frustration in writing this letter.” (reflection)
Counselor: “If the three of us got together, maybe we could come to some resolution on this issue.”

Ineffective Response
Teacher: “This student has no chance of getting into Blank University. Why should I waste my time
writing this letter for her?”
Counselor: “I am sorry that you have given up on her.”

EXAMPLES

Effective Motivational Interviewing
Parent: “My kid has two Fs on his report card. Are there some programs at school that could help him?”
Counselor: “You sound really concerned about his grades.” (reflective listening)
Parent: “I am”
Counselor: “I am glad that you are concerned about his success at school.” (affirmation)

Ineffective Response
Parent: “My kid has two Fs on his report card. Are there some programs at school that could help him?”
Counselor: “We don’t have any programs at school. What have you tried at home?”