

**Missouri Comprehensive Guidance
and Counseling Program:
Responsive Services**

**PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR
CONSULTATION GUIDE**

**A Professional School Counselor's Guide to
Consulting and Collaborating**

Developed by Missouri Professional School Counselors and Counselor Educators
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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.

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 consult with the counselor in the hallway 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 tablet. The counselor may 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 affect 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**
- **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 their roles 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 positively. 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, and identify student strengths.

There are times when participants 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 with information that will be helpful and their roles and responsibilities 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 Roles 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

Several elementary students were on a social media site during school sending inappropriate anonymous messages to another student.

| | |
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| Advisor | Offer student suggestions to protect their digital reputation |
| Advocate | Work with the teacher/administrator/other staff to increase awareness of cyber safety |
| Collaborator | Participate in discussions with parents teachers, administrators and technology directors to integrate cyber safety into the curriculum and develop parent education programs |
| Facilitator | Conduct classroom guidance and parent presentation on cyber safety |
| Mediator | Meet with students to work toward a resolution |

Motivational Interviewing

Effective Response

Student: "I am getting inappropriate anonymous messages on my social media site."

Counselor: "You sound very frustrated and confused." (Reflective listening)

Student: "Yes, I am."

Counselor: "I bet that is really hard for you." (Affirmation)

Ineffective Response

Student: "I am getting inappropriate anonymous messages on my social media site."

Counselor: "Oh, that's too bad honey, just ignore them."

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.

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Advisor | Suggest study and/or organizational strategies that can be implemented at home; provide a resource list for tutoring to the parent. |
| Advocate | Assist the parent in communicating with the student's teacher(s). |
| Collaborator | Participate in a discussion of current student progress with the parent and teachers to develop a plan of action. |
| Facilitator | Facilitate a discussion between the parent, student, and teachers regarding current student progress. |
| Mediator | Meet with student and teacher to address student progress. |

Motivational Interviewing

Effective Response

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?"

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.

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Advisor | Offer the teacher/administrator strategies to explain to the student her concerns and suggest that teacher/administrator refer the student to the professional school counselor. |
| Advocate | Assist the teacher/administrator in gathering information about the student's strengths in other areas. |
| Collaborator | Work with teachers/ administrator to develop a college-planning workshop that includes how to evaluate post-secondary options. |
| Facilitator | Develop an in-service for the faculty on writing letters of recommendation, including how to address challenging situations. |
| Mediator | Meet with teacher/administrator and student to discuss situation. |

Motivational Interviewing

Effective 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 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."

E. Pre-Consultation Planning Guide

Identify Concerns

Identify Possible Participants:

- Teachers
- Administrator
- Other Staff
- Parents/Guardians
- Student
- Internal Resources
- Outside Resources

Determine Meeting Location, Dates, and Times

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
 - Benchmarks Assessments/Reading Level
 - Attendance
 - Cumulative file
 - Parent Contact Information
 - Teacher Observations
 - IEP/Section 504 Information
 - Health Records
 - Previous Interventions
- **Internal Resources (in-district):**
 - Professional School Counselors
 - 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)

F. Sample Meeting Agenda/Consultation Record

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

Student: Grade Level: DOB:

Meeting Date: Beginning Time: Ending Time:

Participants:

Strengths Identified:

Student Data:

- Discipline Reports
- Grades
- Benchmarks Assessments/Reading Level
- Attendance
- Cumulative file
- Parent Contact Information
- Teacher Observations
- IEP/Section 504 Information
- Health Records
- Previous Interventions

Issue/Concern:

Desired Outcome(s):

Outcome Measurements:

Action Plan:

| Post Meeting Responsibilities | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--------------------|------|
| | Follow-Up Strategies | Person Responsible | Date |
| 1. | Communicate action plan with parent/guardian | | |
| 2. | | | |
| 3. | | | |
| | Assess Progress Toward Student Outcome(s) | | |

Provide copies of completed record to participants.

G. Consultation Resources

Websites

www.schoolcounselor.org

American School Counselor Association Ethical Standards & consultation resources

www.counseling.org

American Counselor Association

<http://moga.mo.gov/statutes/statutes.htm>

Missouri statutes

www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

<http://www.motivationalinterview.org/>

Motivational Interviewing resources

Books & Journal Citations

Cobia, D.C. & Henderson, D.A. (2007). *Developing an effective and accountable school counseling program* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson/Merrill/Prentice Hall

Dinkmeyer, D. Jr. & Carlson, J. (2006). *Consultation: Creating School-based interventions* (third edition). New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Walker, J.M.T., Shenker, S.S. & Hoover-Dempsey, K.V. (2010) Why Do Parents Become Involved in Their Children's Education? *Professional School Counseling* 14 (1): 27-41.

*Disclaimer: These are examples of resources available. This is not an exhaustive list of all available resources.