

Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program Local Advisory Council Handbook

*Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling:
Linking School Success with Life Success*

Introduction

A majority of Missouri school districts have adopted the Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program. This program provides for a systematic and developmental introduction of guidance and counseling services to all students attending public schools in the state. One of the cornerstones of the comprehensive guidance and counseling program in any district is the advisory council.

Purpose of a Guidance and Counseling Advisory Council

A Guidance and Counseling Advisory Council is designed to provide input and direction for a local guidance and counseling program both at the district level and building level. An advisory council performs this function by:

- Providing input regarding issues facing school counselors
- Providing direction for continuing in-service and resource material needs.
- Helping to ensure continuity of programs and services
- Providing an avenue for change as is perceived necessary.

The Council promotes close working relationships between the various entities represented on the Council.

Composition of a Guidance and Counseling Advisory Council

Although there is no specific requirement for the make-up of a local advisory council, it should be reflective of the district and the community at large.

Suggested membership might include but not be limited to:

- School counselors
- District and building level administrators
- School board member
- Teachers
- Parents
- Students
- Local business/industry
- Social service agencies

It is recommended that members serve on a 3 year rotation that in such a way that continuity is built into the process. All members are eligible for re-appointment. If a member from the school system should decide to retire before the conclusion of his or her term, he or she will have the option to continue to serve for the remainder of that term. Other members leaving their positions which were the basis for their appointment may also continue for the remainder of their term subject to council

approval. When a member resigns from the board prior to the end of their term of office, that position should be filled immediately.

The district chair of the guidance and counseling department, or lead counselor for the district will be the chair of the committee and be responsible for establishing the agenda. Another member should be assigned to take the minutes.

Advisory Meeting Dates

It is recommended that two will be held each year, usually the fall and spring. Local advisory committees can elect to have additional meetings as warranted. For advisory councils meeting for the first time, dates for the first year meetings should be established at the initial meeting. In following years, dates should be decided upon at the spring meeting for the following year.

Advisory Council Roles and Responsibilities:

Major roles for the council include, but are not limited to:

- Providing advice on the full implementation of the comprehensive guidance and counseling program
- Helping inform various populations about comprehensive guidance and counseling programs and the role of school counselors.
- Assisting in advocating for adequate counselor–student ratios in the schools
- Providing feedback on program effectiveness and offering suggestions for improvement

Specific responsibilities could include but are not limited to:

- Advising on efforts to implement and enhance effective evaluation of the local program
- Assisting in advocating for full implementation of the comprehensive guidance and counseling within the district
- Offering direction and assistance to the guidance and counseling staff in implementing appropriate professional development that addresses local needs
- Maintaining regular attendance at advisory council meetings. It is recognized that occasionally situations will arise that might keep a member from attending. Since the meeting dates will be set in advance, members will be expected, barring emergencies, to attend the meetings. If a member is continually absent from meetings, he or she may want to consider requesting that a replacement be appointed
- Presenting to the school board on behalf of the guidance and counseling program

Getting Started

Once an advisory committee has been named and meetings scheduled it, a framework for the meetings should be established. For an initial meeting this framework might include but not be limited to such things as:

- Introductions
- Overview of the advisory council and its purpose
- Purpose of a comprehensive guidance and counseling program (CGCP)
 - Members outside of guidance and counseling will not have a programmatic understanding of the CGCP. It will be important to educate members on the program and the role and responsibilities of school counselors
- CSIP goals and how the CGCP is addressing those goals
- Review of current activities, including monthly and yearly calendars
- Current data that might provide information on implementation issues
 - Internal Improvement Review data (IIR)
 - Time/Task Analysis data
- Student data (test scores, attendance, office referrals, follow-up data, perception surveys, needs surveys etc. that could be used to help establish priorities for the program.
- Results data that shows impact of interventions

The goal of the first meeting would be to help lay the foundation for future work, notably helping to establish goals and provide input as noted in earlier sections of the handbook. Follow-up meetings would be to report on progress and to refine goals and objectives.

Face to Face and On-line Meetings

Although some face to face meetings are beneficial, time and funds may limit the ability for every meeting to be face to face. If that is the case, then the committee might consider some of the meetings to be held on-line.

Conclusion

An active guidance and counseling advisory council is an expectation for all comprehensive guidance and counseling programs in Missouri. However, it is not just an activity to “check off” for MSIP. A well organized guidance advisory council can support professional school counselors in their efforts to more fully implement their programs by being a strong voice and advocate. Establish and integrate your advisory council into your program and utilize their input to move you forward in the implementation of your guidance and counseling program.