



The Connecticut School Counselor Association

A chartered state division of the American School Counselor Association since 1963

2020 Policy Priorities

In 2019, legislators approved Public Act 19-63 - An Act Concerning Guidelines for a Comprehensive School Counselor Program, which adopts guidelines for a comprehensive school counseling program that ensures that all students have access to a comprehensive school counseling program which provides academic, social-emotional, and post-secondary and career readiness programming by a certified school counselor.

Our 2020 policy priorities aim to better meet the needs of Connecticut students by implementing the Comprehensive School Counseling Framework. We believe this can be achieved by 1) Directing Funding to School Support Services Staff, 2) Requiring districts to employ elementary level school counselors 3) Ensuring that school counselors are spending 80% of their time on direct student services, including eliminating testing duties from the school counselors job responsibilities.

1) Directing Funding to School Support Services Staff

The State spends hundreds of millions of dollars on education funding that goes to local school districts. Funding has been widely criticized with varying proposals to reform the Education Cost Sharing formula. Policymakers and advocates have for years discussed the need for additional school support services, and the CSCA believes local school systems should have the opportunity for specific funds devoted to school support services.

- On the federal level, Senator Jeff Merkley and Congresswoman Katherine Clark introduced the *Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Act (2019)*, new bicameral legislation that would help fill the critical unmet need for school-based mental health services providers in elementary and secondary schools in America.
- The proposal would be to leverage funding, such as a small portion of ECS funding, and allow local districts to apply for funds that would be matched by towns on a sliding fee scale. This would help to ensure that every school can meet the recommended counselor-to-student ratios.
- Another proposal would be to allocate an amount from the Dalio Foundation money to be used by school districts for the hiring of school counselors, social workers and school psychologists.
- Additionally, ESSA Title I, Part A funds for school improvement could be used to specifically hire school counselors in underperforming districts.
- “Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V)” - effective July 2019, with funding implications for postsecondary institutions and some middle grades (defined as fifth–eighth) and secondary schools.

2) Requiring Districts to Employ Elementary Level School Counselors

School counselors at the elementary level use school data (i.e., academic, attendance, discipline data) to help define and intentionally focus on the school counseling program. In consultation with administrators, development of the school counseling program is driven by such data-identified student needs. The elementary school counseling program addresses students’ academic, career, and social-emotional development through multiple-tiered delivery methods, recognizing that students learn in many ways. As a result of school counseling programs at the elementary level, students experience improved academic,

attendance and discipline outcomes related to skills development in academic, social-emotional, career and college readiness (ASCA, 2019).

Current Facts and Challenges:

- 26% of Connecticut school districts (54 of 205) employ elementary school counselors
- There are approximately 614 schools in Connecticut designated as Elementary Schools (serving students in grades PK-5) <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/tableGenerator.aspx>
 - 246 elementary schools have access to an elementary school counselor
 - Many elementary school counselors are providing services to multiple schools and/or are less than full-time employees (82%, or 202 of the 246 elementary schools share a school counselor).
 - Great disparities exist within the DRG’s. In the 26% of districts with elementary school counselors, the student-to-counselor ratio ranges as high as 891:1 (DRG-I), and as low as 223:1 (DRG-A).
 - Approximately 368 elementary schools (60%) provide no access to school counseling programming
- Connecticut ranks 32nd in the nation with an average student : counselor ratio of 444 : 1. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends a ratio of 250 : 1. [Ratios 17-18 Lowest to Highest](#)

Connecticut average ratios compared to states in the Northeast:

(#1) Vermont	196 : 1	(#18) Pennsylvania	380 : 1
(#2) New Hampshire	217 : 1	(#24) Massachusetts	406 : 1
(#4) New York	291 : 1	(#27) Rhode Island	420 : 1
(#7) Maine	319 : 1	NATIONAL AVERAGE	442 : 1
(#15) New Jersey	370 : 1	(#32) Connecticut	444 : 1

3) Ensuring School Counselors Are Spending 80% of Time on Direct Services

Comprehensive school counseling programs, when designed around school-specific data and implemented with fidelity, evidence improved academic, attendance, and behavioral outcomes. To this end, it is essential that school counselors spend most of their time in direct service to and contact with students. School counseling services are focused on the overall delivery of the program through school counseling core curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services. To support this system, a small amount of their time is devoted to indirect services for students. The program is largely prevention-focused; school counselors are able to focus on these prevention needs when inappropriate, non-counseling activities are eliminated or reassigned (ASCA, 2019).

Opportunities for Solutions:

- Propose school counselors at all levels spend at least 80% of their work time, during normal school hours, providing direct services with individual or groups of students.
- Propose school counselors at all levels spend no more than 20% of their work time, during normal school hours, providing indirect services for students.

The Connecticut School Counselor Association (CSCA) is the organization in the state that promotes leadership and creates a professional school counseling identity. This is achieved by connecting, supporting, and empowering school counselors through professional learning and advocacy.