

The Professional School Counselor and Corporal Punishment in the Schools

(Adopted 1995, Revised 2000, 2007)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors advocate abolishing corporal punishment in schools. Corporal punishment is defined as “intentional infliction of pain or discomfort and/or use of physical force upon a student as punishment for an offense of behavior” (American Medical Association; Orentlicher, 1992).

The Rationale

Professional school counselors believe corporal punishment teaches children violence is an acceptable way to resolve differences. In many states, children are the only individuals who officially may be punished, under law, by physical force. Corporal punishment seriously compromises self-esteem and contradicts the fundamental right of all children to be free from bodily pain and injury. Research says that corporal punishment is an ineffective method of changing student behavior (Robinson, Funk, Beth, & Bush, 2005) and has long-term implications for the well-being and mental health of children and adolescents (American Academy of Pediatrics, 1998; Turner & Muller, 2004).

The Professional School Counselor’s Role

Professional school counselors have a responsibility to protect the students they serve and to promote the use of positive and effective disciplinary methods. Research shows physical punishment to be ineffective in teaching new behaviors and to be detrimental in teaching problem-solving methods. The professional school counselor acts as a resource person to school personnel for the implementation of effective intervention strategies that do not include corporal punishment in order to facilitate positive individual development.

It is school counselors’ professional responsibility to advocate for public and legislative bodies to abolish corporal punishment in schools. Professional school counselors encourage public recognition of the consequences of corporal punishment, disseminate research on alternatives to corporal punishment and encourage legislation prohibiting continued use of corporal punishment in states where such use exists.

Summary

ASCA seeks the elimination of corporal punishment in schools. Professional school counselors promote understanding of and research on alternatives to corporal punishment, seek legislative solutions and advocate for the use of more effective and affirmative discipline methods.

References

American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health Policy Statement: Guidance for effective discipline (1998). *Pediatrics*, 101(4), 723-728.

Orentlicher, D. (1992). Corporal punishment in schools. *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, 267, 3205.

Robinson, D., Funk, D., Beth, A., & Bush, A. (2005). Changing beliefs about corporal punishment: Increasing knowledge about ineffectiveness. *Journal of Behavioral Education*, 14, 117-139.

Turner, H., & Muller, P. (2004). Long-term effects of child corporal punishment on depressive symptoms in young adults: Potential moderators and mediators. *Journal of Family Issues*, 25, 761-782.