

## **The Professional School Counselor and Bullying, Harassment and Violence-Prevention Programs: Supporting Safe and Respectful Schools**

(Adopted 1994/2000, Revised 2005)

### **American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position**

Professional school counselors recognize the need for all students to attend school in a safe, orderly and caring environment. To promote this type of environment, comprehensive school counseling programs include violence-prevention activities and programs fostering a positive school climate.

### **The Rationale**

A safe school environment is essential for effective learning. Incidents involving bullying, harassment, violence, weapons or gang behavior threaten student and staff safety, and students, parents, staff, administrators, legislators and the community recognize the need to provide a safe school environment.

Violence-prevention activities are integral to creating a safe school environment that is free of fear, bullying, harassment and violence. Delivered by professional school counselors, teachers, administrators and qualified community experts, violence prevention programs increase the opportunity for improved academic achievement, appropriate behavior and increased attendance. Participating in violence-prevention activities empowers and encourages students to take responsibility for their behavior and for the climate of their school and community.

### **The Professional School Counselor's Role**

Professional school counselors collaborate with others to promote safe schools and confront issues threatening school safety. Professional school counselors encourage the development of policies supporting a safe school environment, and they provide leadership to the school by assisting in the design and implementation of schoolwide violence prevention activities and programs. Comprehensive violence-prevention programs require data-driven decision making, coordination, instruction and evaluation of the program, and they are most effective when incorporated into the academic curriculum by all members of the school community. The professional school counselor includes violence-prevention programs as a part of the comprehensive school counseling program and ensures that violence-prevention programs include training in:

- communication skills
- conflict-resolution skills
- decision-making skills
- development of cultural competence
- acceptance of differences
- recognition of early warning signs of violence
- prevention/intervention services
- crisis response
- appropriate use of technology
- community involvement
- parent education
- evaluation of program effectiveness
- building relationships

### **Summary**

Professional school counselors understand the need for all students to attend safe, orderly and caring schools. Through participation in violence-prevention programs and activities, students learn communication, problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills that help them achieve their goals and establish successful relationships. Professional school counselors collaborate with teachers, administrators, parents and the community to deliver violence-prevention programs that encourage student growth and achievement.