

# School Counselor General FAQ

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### 1. Where can I find information on school counselor certification?

The requirements to become a Texas School Counselor can be found on the Texas Education Agency (TEA) [Student Services Certificates website](#). If you have additional questions, please submit a [Certification Help Desk](#) ticket.

### 2. Where can I find information on school counselors serving special education students?

School Counselors cannot make Special Education Eligibility Determinations under 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC), §89.1040. The determination must be made by a licensed specialist in school psychology (LSSP), educational diagnostician, or other appropriately certified or licensed practitioner with experience and training in the area of the disability or a certified professional for a specific eligibility category.

When serving special education students, certified school counselors can:

- provide a comprehensive school counseling program in accordance with [Chapter 33](#) of the Texas Education Code (TEC) to all students including special education students; and
- serve on the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

For assistance with serving special education students, contact your local [Regional Education Service Center staff specialist](#).

### 3. Where can I find information on school counselors and multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS)?

"The multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework can be considered the umbrella for other support systems, such as data-based individualization (DBI), response to intervention (RTI), and positive behavior intervention and supports (PBIS). MTSS encompasses career, academic, behavioral, and mental health supports for all students" (Tier Network, 2020).

School counselors play a vital role in the MTSS framework. For information on the school counselor role in MTSS, visit the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) position statement: *The School Counselor and Multitiered System of Supports*. School counselors should be team members, under the guidance of a campus instructional leader who is directing the MTSS effort. The following are examples of how an MTSS framework may require the district's leadership:

- MTSS can involve the re-allocation of resources such as federal, state, and local funds;
- MTSS can involve the shifting of staff duties and responsibilities;
- MTSS can involve decision making that impacts the entire school district;
- MTSS involves supervision (fidelity of implementation);
- MTSS involves buy-in from administration;
- MTSS can involve a shift in current instructional practices (i.e. the inclusion of students in the general education setting who were served in a special education setting previously);

- MTSS involves professional development;
- MTSS involves support provided to staff by the instructional leader;
- MTSS involves collaboration (common planning, aligning of curriculum, dialogue among staff, etc.); and
- MTSS involves change.

#### **4. What is *The Texas Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs*?**

*The Texas Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs, Fifth Edition, (Texas Model) is a guide for creating, implementing, and evaluating a comprehensive school counseling program, aligned to the statutory requirements established in TEC, §33.005. The Texas Model is a "resource to help students benefit from high-quality and effective comprehensive school counseling programs. It aligns with Texas state law governing the work of school counselors" (TEA, 2018, page 5). You can download a free copy of the Texas Model at the following link: <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/learning-support-and-programs/school-guidance-and-counseling/pub2018texas-model5th-edition.pdf>.*

#### **5. Where can I read the most recent TEA correspondence to school districts?**

*All TEA general correspondence is posted at the [TEA Correspondence webpage](#).*

#### **6. How can I find information on conferences, training, workshops, resources, and other information relevant to school counselors?**

*Visit TEA's [Counseling, Advising, and Student Supports webpage](#) for Texas school counseling information and resources. In addition, you can contact the school counselor specialist at your [Education Service Center](#) for additional resources. Below are three professional development organizations that provide professional development for school counselors:*

- [The American School Counselor Association](#)
- [The Lone Star State School Counselor Association](#)
- [The Texas School Counseling Association](#)

#### **7. Does a parent have an unrestricted right of access to the school counseling records of his or her minor child?**

*Texas Attorney General Opinion No. JC-0538 states the following: Generally, all student records are available to parents. Only under very narrow and unusual circumstances may a minor child's school counseling records be withheld from a parent. Under the Federal Family Educational and Privacy Rights Act, a public school may withhold a minor child's counseling records from a parent only if the records are kept in the sole possession of the counselor, are used only as the counselor's personal memory aid, and are not accessible or revealed to any other person except a temporary substitute for the counselor. Within this circumscribed category, state law permits the counselor to withhold a minor child's records only if the counselor is a "professional," as defined in section 611 .001(2) of the Health and Safety Code, and further, if the counselor "determines that release" of such record "would be harmful to the patient's physical, mental, or emotional health." If the counselor does not fall within the category of licensed professional under section 611 .001(2) of the Health and Safety Code, section 26.004 of the Education*

*Code prevails, and the parent “is entitled to access to all written records” of the school district “concerning the parent’s child, including . . . counseling records.”*

**8. What is the State of Texas' Minimum Salary Schedule for Professional School Counselors, Experience, and Rules for Creditable Years of Service?**

*The minimum salary schedules, experience and rules for creditable years of service is located on the [TEA Minimum Salary Schedule](#) webpage.*

**9. Where do I find information on counselor-to-student ratios?**

*The number of school counselors needed to staff the program is dependent on the students' and community's needs and on the goals and design of the local program. The ratios should be sufficiently low to meet the identified, high-priority needs of the students and the school community. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends a maximum ratio of 1:250. It is clear that the larger the counselor's student load, the less individual attention students receive; the smaller the student load, the more individual attention is allowed for. If the district or campus staff identifies high-priority needs of students who require individual or small group attention, the adopted ratio must reflect that. The number of students in a counselor's student load who have intensified needs for responsive services dictates lower ratios. Special needs populations include students who are educationally or economically disadvantaged, physically or emotionally disabled or abused, highly mobile, dropout prone, and/or migrant.*

**10. Where can I find the list of appropriate school counseling duties on which a school counselor must spend at least 80 percent of their total work time?**

*General school counseling duties are listed in [TEC, §33.006](#), and relate to the components of a counseling program developed under [TEC, 33.005](#). Additionally, page 119 of [the Texas Model](#) also has a list of appropriate school counseling duties. You can also find more information on this topic in the [Counselor Work Time FAQs](#).*

**11. How can I work collaboratively to decrease non-counseling duties?**

*Page 117 of the [Texas Model](#) has a list of bulleted steps that detail how a school counselor and principal can work collaboratively to remove non-counseling duties from the school counselor’s workload. In this way, the school counselor will be able to optimally support students through a comprehensive school counseling program.*

**12. Where can I find information about financial aid requirements for graduation?**

*This information can be found on the [TEA Financial Aid Graduation Requirement](#) webpage.*

**13. Where can I find information about graduation requirements, credits, and transcripts?**

*The [State Graduation Requirements webpage](#) provides information about Texas high school graduation requirements. Additional questions on these three topics can be sent to the [Curriculum Help Desk](#).*

**14. How can I use data in my school counseling program?**

*The [Texas Model](#) has extensive information and resources on using data in school counseling. You can find guidance on how to use data in Sections II (pages 38-40), III (pages 57-72), and IV (pages 106-114).*

*In addition, the ASCA publication, [Making Data Work](#), gives school counselors a step-by-step plan on how to use data in their program.*

**15. Should I keep school counseling notes and, if so, when can I purge them?**

*Yes, the expected standard of care in school counseling is to keep brief, objective notes, identifying the problem and solution in your meeting with a student or caregiver. These notes can generally be purged when you or the student transition to another school campus. However, for more detailed information on this topic, review the [ASCA Code of Ethics](#), especially item A.12.f.*

**16. Is a school district or open-enrollment charter school required to have a school counselor on staff?**

*Certain provisions of the Texas Education Code (TEC) require that students of a district or charter school receive services from school counselors (e.g., TEC, §33.007(a), (b), and (c)). As a result, a district or charter school must have access to a school counselor to provide services to students in such situations.*

**17. Where can I find a Texas school counselor job description?**

*You can find a sample job description in the [Texas Model](#) on pages 27-28 and in Appendix D.*

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