

Specialized Instructional Support Personnel

There has been no time in education when it has been more important for schools to utilize their Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP) appropriately. School Counselors, School Social Workers, and School Psychologists each have unique and critical skills that support students socially/emotionally and academically. School Counselors also work closely with students to develop goals and plans for their futures.

When it comes to the behavioral health of students, and staff, these SISP are the first line of response. It is critical that they be allowed to do the jobs for which they were trained. Their first priority is to work with students and attend to their needs so they may learn in an environment of support and care.

School Counselors:

- Are responsible for fully implementing the Comprehensive School Counseling Program that addresses the academic, social/emotional, and career development needs of 100% of the students.
- Deliver a k-12 curriculum that teaches critical life skills in the areas listed above. The social/emotional lessons address topics such as decision-making, problem-solving, resiliency, and communication. These skills are essential to the evolution of a healthy mental and emotional mindset.
- Are the first line of defense as they deliver mental health services to all students, families, and staff, on a Tier One basis.
- Are able to make referrals to other SISP, as well as to outside providers.
- School Counselors serve an important consultative role within the IEP and 504 teams as they work with the whole child within their scope of practice.

School Psychologists:

- Work primarily with students who are exhibiting significant issues with learning and behavior, which include mental health issues.
- Through assessment, diagnosis and treatment plans, School Psychologists work to support students who need Tier Two and Tier Three services.
- Work with families and educators in ensuring that students receive the interventions and supports needed for academic and social/emotional success.

School Social Workers:

- Work primarily with students who are exhibiting significant issues with learning and behavior, which include mental health issues.
- Provide targeted Tier Two and Tier Three services for students having significant mental health concerns.
- Focus on strengthening the partnership between school, home, and community to provide comprehensive support for students.
- Serve as a liaison of the school with any supplemental contracted mental health service providers.

These Specialized Instructional Support Personnel all play important roles in the behavioral health and learning success of students in today's schools. They support all educators and families through

consultation, interventions, and brief counseling as they all work together in the best interest of students.

Some school communities do not have the benefit of having school social workers or school psychologists. In those cases, the role of the school counselor in providing appropriate services must become well-defined. To assist students who are experiencing mental health difficulties in the school setting, school counselors working in schools without school psychologists and/or school social workers may do the following:

- Conduct short-term counseling with the student (3-6 sessions).
- Offer small group counseling on an issue that may help the student.
- Serve as a resource for Tier Two and Tier Three needs.
- Consult with the classroom teachers and other school personnel regarding strategies to help the student be more successful during the school day.
- Work with a Care Team to strategize the best way to help the student be successful in the school setting.
- Consult with parents/guardians regarding strategies that may be used at home.
- Refer parents/guardians to outside providers who specialize in working with the age of the specific student.
- Focus on strengthening the partnership between school, home, and community to provide comprehensive support for students.
- Serve as a liaison of the school with any supplemental contracted mental health service providers.