

Policy News

Washington State
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Association



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Guidance and Counseling Programs

During the 2006 legislative session, a law was passed to strengthen schools' guidance and counseling programs. The law recognizes the skills and body of knowledge that each student needs to successfully complete their K-12 experience. Attainment of those skills and knowledge requires active involvement of a parent or guardian and at least one supportive adult in the school who cares about the student's progress and future. For adults to assist students with setting short- and long-term goals, parents and teachers need an accurate diagnosis of each student's academic strengths and weaknesses. Guidance and counseling programs play a critical role in providing that diagnosis.

The legislation did not mandate a guidance and counseling program for each school, but rather strongly encouraged "each middle school, junior high school, and high school to implement a comprehen-

sive guidance and planning program for all students." The purpose of the program is to support students as they navigate their education and plan their future; encouraging an ongoing and personal relationship between each student and adult in the school.

Despite the permissive nature of the legislation, it nonetheless identifies the key components of a comprehensive guidance and planning program. Those components include a curriculum that provides the skills and knowledge students need to select courses, explore options, plan for their future and take steps to implement their plans; regular meetings between each student and a teacher who serves as an advisor throughout the student's enrollment at the school; student-led conferences with the student's parents, guardians or family members and the

student's advisor; and data collection that allows schools to monitor students' progress.

By January 2009, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) will report to the Legislature on the impact of comprehensive guidance and planning programs on student performance.

To support boards in providing their district with a comprehensive policy, the WSSDA model policy 2140, Guidance and Counseling, is revised to reflect the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model of Counseling core principles. The Model supports a counseling program that is a collaborative effort benefiting students, parents, teachers, administrators and the overall community. Further, the school counseling program is an integral part of a student's academic experience. In other words, school counseling plays an integral role in student academic achievement.

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Policy News

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About the WSSDA

Founded in 1922, the Washington State School Directors' Association is comprised of all 1,477 school board members from Washington's 295 school districts. The districts they lead serve more than one million students, have a combined annual budget of \$6 billion, and employ nearly 100,000 people. WSSDA's core mission is focused on ensuring that school board members have the knowledge, tools and services they need to effectively govern their districts and improve student learning.

The ASCA National Model supports a district's mission by promoting academic achievement, career planning and personal and social development. The Model has four interrelated components: foundation, delivery system, management systems and accountability. The goal of the Model is to allow counselors to deliver services that support academic achievement to all students.

The foundation component of the school counseling program is based on the district's goals for student achievement. The core components of the foundation are the district's beliefs, philosophy and mission. The counseling mission is a subset of the district's overall mission.

The delivery system describes the activities, interactions and methods necessary to deliver the program. For example, the guidance curriculum could be integrated throughout the school's overall curriculum and presented systematically through the K-12 classrooms and group activities. Other components of the delivery system include individual student planning, responsive services and systems support.

The management system consists of the processes and tools to ensure the program is organized, concrete, clearly delineated and reflective of the school's needs. This includes management agreements, advisory councils, use of data, counselor's action plans, use of time and use of calendars.

The accountability system is the process used by school counselors and administrators to demonstrate the effectiveness of the school counseling program. Typically this

occurs by collecting and using data that measures the effectiveness of program delivery.

The national Model also includes standards for students. These standards guide student competencies in academic, career and personal social development. In the area of academic development, the Model supports students' acquisition of the attitudes, knowledge and skills for effective learning and completion of school. With these skills students are ready for a wide range of options and equipped with an understanding of the relationship of academics to work.

In the area of career development the Model promotes students acquiring the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed decisions. Students should also employ strategies to achieve future career goals and to understand the relationship between personal qualities, education, training and the world of work.

In the area of personal and social development the Model suggests that students acquire the skill to help them understand and respect self and others, to make decisions, set goals and take the action necessary to achieve goals. Additionally, students must understand safety and survival skills.

Encompassed within personal and social development are prevention and response strategies to youth suicide. The contents of the former WSSDA model procedure 2140, Guidance and Counseling, contains a section devoted to suicide response. In the updated policy this area is incorporated within the counselor's delivery system of responsive services, which is representative of the holistic approach advocated by the national Model.

HIV/AIDS Prevention

Since 1988, districts in Washington have provided yearly human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) prevention education beginning in grade five. The law succinctly outlines the components of a district's program and parent notification requirements.

Specifically, each district's board of directors is required to adopt an AIDS prevention program in consultation with stakeholders. The district may choose either the model curriculum developed by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) or district developed curriculum that has been approved for medical and scientific accuracy by the Department of Health (DOH).

"Medically and scientifically accurate" refers to information that is verified or supported by research. Such research is conducted in compliance with scientific methods and published in peer-review journals, where appropriate, and recognized as accurate and objective by professional organizations and agencies with expertise in the relevant field, such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the DOH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The law requires that HIV/AIDS prevention education stress the life-threatening dangers of contracting AIDS and stress that abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain method of preventing transmission of the virus. HIV/AIDS prevention education must also

stress that the use of condoms does not guarantee prevention of the disease. Prevention education regarding HIV/AIDS is needed to eliminate exposure, prevent transmission and to understand the consequences of an HIV compromised immune system.

This issue of *Policy News* clarifies that AIDS prevention education includes information on the virus that causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

The law has not changed. The WSSDA model policy is simply updated to make it consistent with the existing law. If you have not reviewed your policy and practices lately, this might be a good opportunity to ensure that instruction is provided consistent with the law.

Use of Reasonable Force Policy

Earlier this year, the Legislature directed WSSDA to establish a task force to review and make recommendations regarding the use of physical force in schools. On November 1, WSSDA's Student Disciplinary Action Task Force issued its final report along with a model policy and procedure. The Task Force that developed the policy and procedure represented a variety of educational, community and professional stakeholders. The work group reviewed use of force statutes from other states; the current laws in Washington regarding use of force; sample policies and procedures; and security models used in Washington public schools.

The law does not require districts to adopt a policy on the use of force. Nonetheless all districts, especially those districts which have

security personnel, should seriously consider adoption of a district-wide policy.

If a district chooses to adopt a policy, it should simultaneously analyze related use-of-force issues. To assist districts with implementation, the Task Force report provides recommended policy considerations. The Task Force recommendations include:

1. **Adopt a policy and procedure:** At a minimum the policy should describe the use of force authorized within the district; define physical, mechanical and chemical force; prohibit the use of force as discipline; and require adoption of appropriate procedures to implement the policy. The accompanying procedure should define terms; provide a use of force continuum for the district; contain

descriptions of the appropriate and inappropriate use of force, including provisions for special education students; describe the training requirements for staff; contain reporting requirements for district staff; and, provide a process for notification to parents.

2. **Develop job descriptions for security personnel:** Job descriptions for security personnel are critical, therefore the task force recommends that every district have established job descriptions for security personnel that specify roles and responsibilities, training required, reporting duties and supervision.
3. **Draft a written agreement with law enforcement:** A written agreement that addresses training and supervision, evaluation and compliance with the

district policy and procedure is necessary to ensure conformity from security personnel employed through a local law enforcement agency. The training component should specifically address the unique role of security personnel in the school environment.

4. **Provide staff training:** In addition to specialized training for law enforcement, training of school personnel must also be addressed. For those staff expected to use physical force, mechanical restraints or chemical sprays, training should be mandatory. At a minimum all staff should receive information on the use of force and copies of the district's policy and procedure.
5. **Develop an operations manual:** For districts employing security personnel in multiple buildings, it is recommended that the district develop and publish a school security operations manual to provide consistent guidance throughout the district.
6. **Create a district-wide reporting system:** Effective monitoring and continuance improvement requires a process for fol-

low-up and reporting of use of force incidents. The Task Force recommends that districts develop a use of force reporting form for staff and provide a debriefing opportunity to discuss an incident.

7. **Develop a parent notification process:** Prompt notification to parents or guardians is essential whenever there is a use of force incident.
8. **Offer opportunities for community input:** Districts are directed to develop effective communication with community members regarding use of force practices and include a dispute resolution component in their policy and procedure.

Several of the issues discussed by the Task Force go beyond policy implications and require legislative action. Therefore, the final report also provides recommendations to the Legislature. The legislative recommendations include:

1. **Determine whether the policy is mandatory or optional:** The Legislature should determine whether adoption of a district policy becomes mandatory for all school districts.

2. **Establish training requirements:** Currently, training is limited to that provided by the Washington State School Safety Advisory Committee or private security agencies. The Legislature could choose to expand or modify existing training requirements.
3. **Address certification and licensure:** The Legislature must determine whether to require certification and licensure for security personnel.
4. **Implement statewide data collection and reporting:** Districts are not currently required to collect data on use of force in schools. The Legislature should consider requiring this information to determine the scope of the use of force.
5. **Provide appropriate funding:** The report points out that if the Legislature chooses to require training, licensure or certification, or data collection those actions will have fiscal impacts on school districts and adequate funding should be provided.

A full copy of the report is available on the WSSDA Web site at wssda.org.

Child Custody

In the October issue of *Policy News* we updated Policy 3124, Removal/Release of Student During School Hours, and 3126, Child Custody. Our goal was to clarify a district's responsibility to notify a residential parent if a non-residential parent (or anyone else) attempts to pick up or contact a student during school hours. If there are no court

imposed restrictions on file with the district, a student may be released to the non-residential parent as well as the residential parent. In that circumstance, the district may make an effort to notify the residential parent, but in the absence of a court order limiting contact, the district does not have a duty to provide notice.

If there are court imposed restrictions or prohibitions on picking up or contacting a student, the student will not be released to the non-custodial parent or anyone else.