

Date: April 12, 2010

To: Georgette Nemr, Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification

From: Kathy Scully, President, Connecticut School Counselor Association (CSCA)

Subject: **Summary of Concerns on Special Services Certification Proposal for School Counselors**

The following document outlines the concerns of the Connecticut School Counselor Association (CSCA) in regard to the proposed certification changes for school counselors and the provision of services to students with disabilities. School counselors in Connecticut have a clearly defined comprehensive program (published in 2008) that serves all students in the state and has been endorsed by the Commissioner of Education. The proposed changes in services and certification will be an impediment to program implementation and delivery to all students as the new focus is specifically geared toward serving only students with special needs.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recently cited a released [study](#) by Public Agenda that illustrates what can go wrong when there are not enough school counselors to support students and when school counselors are placed in positions preventing them from performing the functions they were trained and hired to do. Although ASCA, the American Counseling Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Medical Association and other organizations recommend a pupil-to-school-counselor ratio of 250-to-1, the national average is 460 students to one school counselor, with some school districts as high as 1,000-to-1. Taking on a special education role will only compound the problem as cited in the above quote.

Who will be available to meet the needs of the non-special education students, if school counselors assume the role of special education specialists?

Topic	CSCA Position/Concerns
Section 10-145d-922 Provision of services to students with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) SDE has defined the role of the school counselor, school psychologist, marriage and family, language pathologist, and school social worker as interchangeable. (b) Counselors provide direct instruction through the CT Comprehensive Program on developmental issues to all students (regular education and students with special needs) in a mainstream classroom setting. (c) School counseling services such as individual counseling on personal/social, career, and academic issues, and small groups work to meet the developmental needs of the students (i.e., coping skills, peer relationships study skills, anger management, etc.) (d) Counselors are trained to interpret standardized tests of achievement, ability, aptitude and career interest inventories for the purposes of academic preparation and planning. This aligns with the best practices outlined by both the CT Comprehensive School Counseling Guide and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Program Model.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (e) School counselors do not have an in depth knowledge of special education services and strategies. Training includes only one introductory course on special education/gifted and talented programs. (f) School counselors are not trained to consult on the best practices of special education services, modifications and accommodations of instruction as identified by the PPT. School counselors are required to take only one course in general curriculum and instruction. (g) Training for school counselors does not include assessing the assistive technology needs of special education students or diagnostic assessment for the purpose of determining special education eligibility. (h) School counselors are a member of the PPT who interpret the student’s academic record and standardized testing results (i.e. SAT, PSAT, ACT, CAPT, CMT). (i) All students in the school setting including students with special needs are assigned a school counselor. The ratio of school counselors to students in CT is 1:409 per ASCA. School counselors are the only professionals in the school system who are specifically trained in planning, implementing, delivering and coordinating all of the services in a comprehensive school counseling program. (j) The increased demands placed on school counselors significantly decrease the ability to meet the demands of all students in the personal/social, academic, and career domains as defined by the CT Comprehensive School Counseling Program as endorsed by the SDE. (k) The school counselor has a significant role in the Key Elements of Connecticut’s Plan for Secondary School Reform, i.e. the focus on 21st Century Skills and the Career Pathways Initiatives that will be delivered to all students.
<p>Section 10-145d-924 Initial Educator Certification</p>	<p>(a) The internship is jointly supervised by the preparing institution and a <i>certified school psychologist</i>? School counseling interns have historically been supervised by a school counselor.</p>
<p>Section 10-145d-926 Professional Educator Certification</p>	<p>(a) A minimum of 20 hours of training in design, assessment, and implementation of behavioral support and analysis services for students with behavioral disabilities or autism spectrum disorders-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Clarification needed. Will this be offered through the school systems? Will counselors have to take college course work? (ii) How will only 20 hours of training address the issues cited in Section 10-145d-926 C (iii) What is the expected outcome of the training?