

Date: April 29, 2010

To: Panel to Hear Public Comments on Proposed Changes for Certification of School Counselors

From: Patricia A. Landers

Re: Proposed New Certification Regulations for CT School Counselors as outlined under Part XV, Special Services – Section 10-145d-922, Provision of services to students with disabilities

My name is Patricia Landers and I am an Adjunct Instructor in the Counseling & Family Therapy Department at Central Connecticut State University. Prior to this appointment, I was the Director of School Counseling, grades 6-12, for the Newington School System for 33 years.

I have two major concerns about the proposed regulations for school counselors.

Concern 1:

The grouping of school counselors under provision of services to students with disabilities.

- Unlike other specialties in the school system, school counselors work with all students in the school. They are assigned a caseload of students and are expected to work with them, their parents, teachers, and administrators to facilitate student potential for growth in the three broad areas of academic, career, and personal/social development. All students, regular and special education, being assigned to a school counselor is unique to the profession as is its focus on these three broad areas of student growth and development that form the core of content for the Connecticut Comprehensive School Counseling Program, K-12, which was published by the State Department of Education in 2008.
- The program content is delivered through the school counseling curriculum, annual individual student planning sessions, which result in portfolios outlining career and educational pathways, individual and group counseling that address student problems in the three developmental areas, and school counselor collaborative and advocacy efforts within the school and community. The program emphasizes the importance of helping students to cope with the serious challenges of growing up, including peer pressure and mental health issues, school adjustment, decision making, goal setting and education, career and college planning.
- The ultimate goals of school counseling are to provide strategies that enhance academic progress and achievement of all students, and to provide assistance and direction to students in establishing academic, career and personal goals, as well as developing future career and education plans. In fact, results of a recent two-year research project conducted collaboratively among the Connecticut School Counseling Association, The Connecticut State Department of Education, and the Center for School Counseling Outcome Research at the University of Massachusetts found that more intensive college and career counseling services provided for high school students were associated with significant reductions in suspensions rates and in the total number of disciplinary incidents in Connecticut high schools for the 2008-2009 school year.

Concern 2:

The new regulations focus on an in depth knowledge of special education and the coordination of case management services for students with disabilities.

- School counselors historically have had regular and special education students as part of their caseload and work collaboratively with special education case managers on behalf of the students and their parents.
- Regulations that require school counselors to function as special education specialists will define school counseling as a one dimensional profession focusing primarily on the

needs of special education students and placing school counselors in a position of spending 90% of their time with 10% of the school population. This will mean the virtual elimination of comprehensive school counseling programs in Connecticut that are designed to address the needs of all students.

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