

**THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR AS A PROVIDER OF
RELATED COUNSELING SERVICES UNDER I.D.E.A., 1997**

Definition

Section 300.22 of IDEA, 1997 states that the term related services means “.... *other supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education, and includes counseling services The term also includes parent counseling and training.....*”

Discussion

The school counselor’s role in the area of special education is a multifaceted one. Counselors provide developmental and related services to students with educational disabilities, as they do for all students in their caseload. They consult with parents of children in special education, help them to understand their special needs, and provide them with information about child development and community resources tailored to their needs. Additional related services are provided by the counselor as time and responsibilities allow. Attendant to this role are the related roles of crisis intervention, consultation to parents and teachers, and individual and group counseling (proactive and remedial) for a caseload of students ranging from 300 to 800 students per school counselor. Additionally, school counselors are required to coordinate school wide initiatives which address students’ social-emotional development (e.g., self-esteem programs, social skills training, conflict resolution/peer mediation initiatives, parent training programs).

By incorporating disabled children within their proactive large group guidance programs, remedial small group and individual counseling services, and consulting regularly with the parents and teachers of educationally disabled students, the school counseling program plan addresses the social-emotional needs of the majority of students receiving special education services. Since all students receive the school counselor’s services, there is no need to identify specific school counseling services on the majority of IEPs.

It is standard practice within Baltimore County Public Schools that school counselors are not routinely a part of the IEP Team. Participation should be in response to a need for input by the counselor regarding specific issues or students. Additionally, participation in a specific IEP team should be based on whether or not the school counselor’s services can address the handicapping condition of the student. The use of a school counselor as a case manager for a student with an educational disability is not an appropriate use of the counselor’s time.

Counseling is listed in federal (Section 300.22 of IDEA, 1997) and state regulations (COMAR 13.A.05.01) as a possible related service a student with a disability may need in order to benefit from special education. Counselors must be involved in the IEP Team if the decision is reached that they are to provide services. This service must be specifically defined within the content of the student’s IEP.

The school must keep track of the amount of time the counselor is assigned, the counselor’s caseload of students in a school, and the scope of the school counseling program plan, and seek additional resources when the needs of educationally disabled student require services greater than can be provided by existing staff.

Application

In view of the fact that all students are served by professional school counselors who are in every school in the Baltimore County Public Schools system, the related services counseling needs of special education students are being met. In the rare occasions where a counseling goal requires more than the related services which already exist, it is recommended that IEP teams code this goal as “90, counselor consultation.” Using this strategy, IEP teams can identify the specific social-emotional needs of special education students which can be appropriately addressed through a combination school counselor’s services. Rather than identify actual counseling hours, IEP teams are advised, in these rare occasions where additional counseling goals are spelled out, to allow the counselor, through consultation, to determine the shape and time allotments for counseling services. Only in very rare cases assigned hours may be included in an IEP but the duration of services should be reviewed to determine the continuation of need for services.