

SAVE THE DATE!



Join PA SCHOOLS WORK for a Lunch & Learn Webinar

PA's School Counselor Shortage:

New Report Quantifies A Problem That Is
More Important Than Ever

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31ST

12:00pm-12:30pm

PASCHOOLSWORK.ORG



FACEBOOK.COM/PASCHOOLSWORK

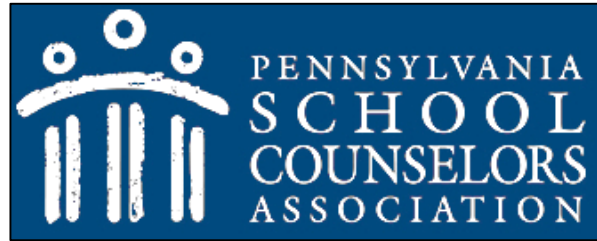


TWITTER.COM/PASCHOOLSWORK

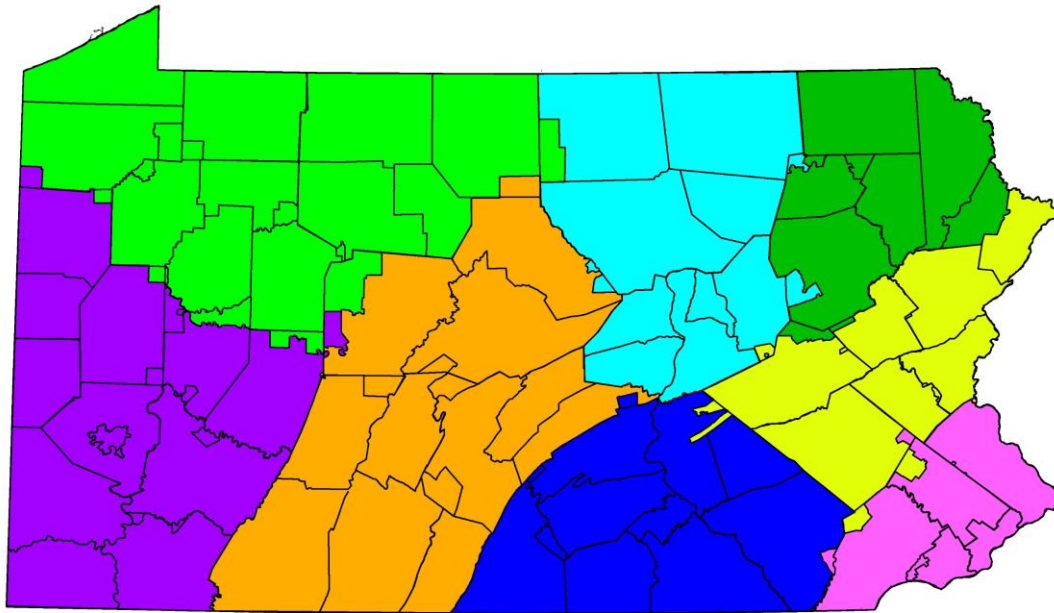


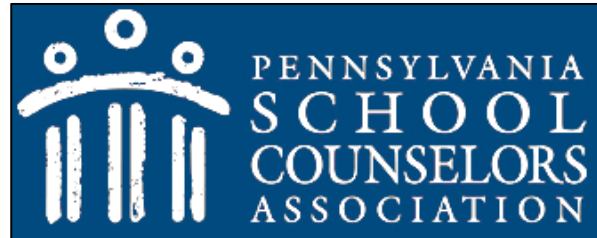
EMILIA PEIFFER, PSCA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ADAM OLDHAM, PSCA GOVERNMENT RELATIONS





The mission of the Pennsylvania School Counselors Association is to expand the image and influence of professional school counselors, to promote professional and ethical practice, and to advocate for equity and access for all students.

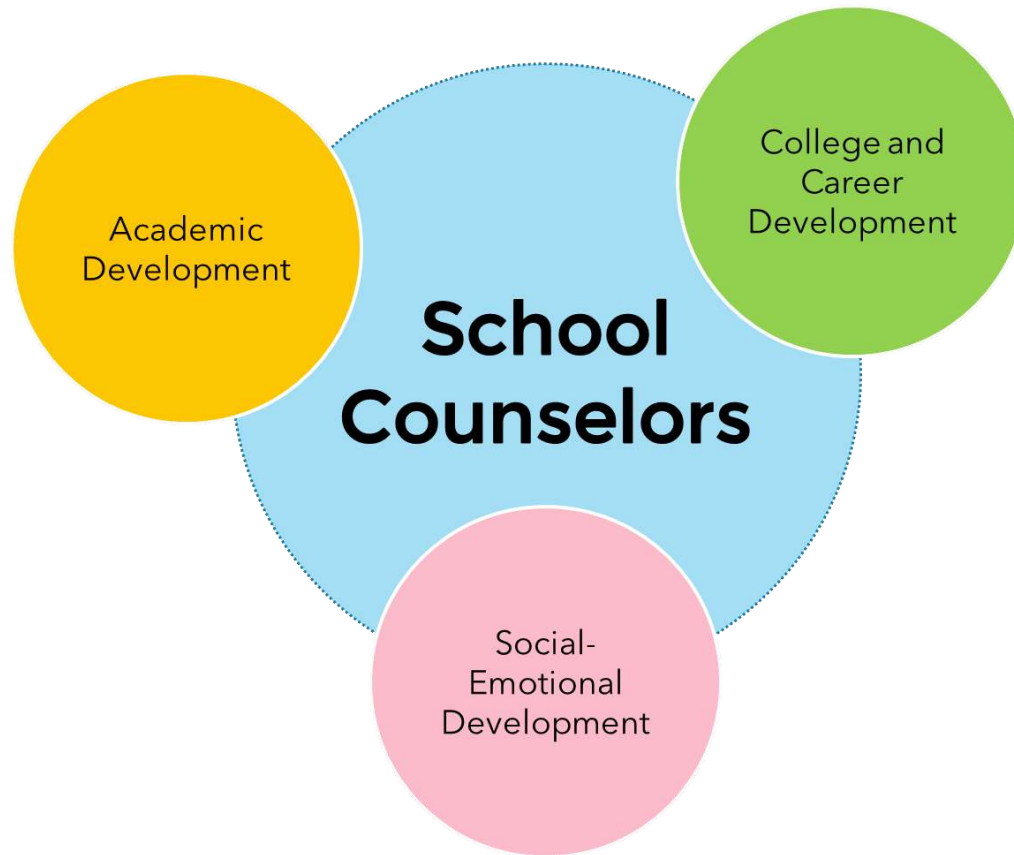




WHO ARE SCHOOL COUNSELORS?

Who are School Counselors?

(The Role of the School Counselor, American School Counselor Association)



SCHOOL COUNSELOR QUALIFICATIONS

- ▶ **Hold, at minimum, a master's degree in school counseling**
- ▶ **Meet the state certification/licensure standards**
- ▶ **Fulfill continuing education requirements**
- ▶ **Uphold ASCA ethical and professional standards**

Direct Services with Students

Direct services are in-person interactions between school counselors and students and include the following:

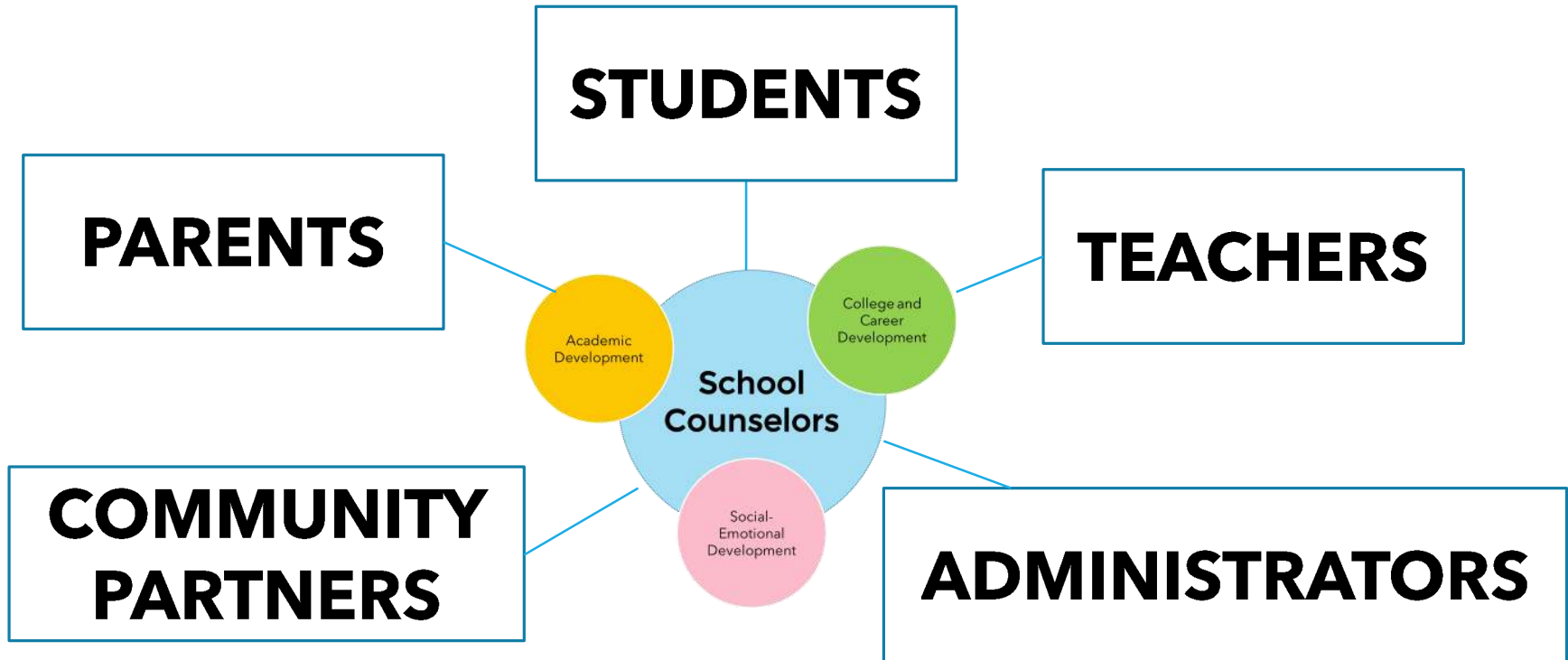
- Instruction
- Appraisal and Advisement
- Counseling

Indirect Services for Students

Indirect services are provided on behalf of students as a result of the school counselors' interactions with others including:

- Consultation
- Collaboration
- Referrals

School counselors are a unique **nexus point** for all educational stakeholders in a school community.



As school employees,
school counselors are a part of students' educational environment
and therefore have **an informed perspective**
on specific difficulties students may be facing.

School Counselors – A Cost Effective Infrastructure for Student Support

School counselors deliver Tier 1 instruction, prevention, and screening to **all students**

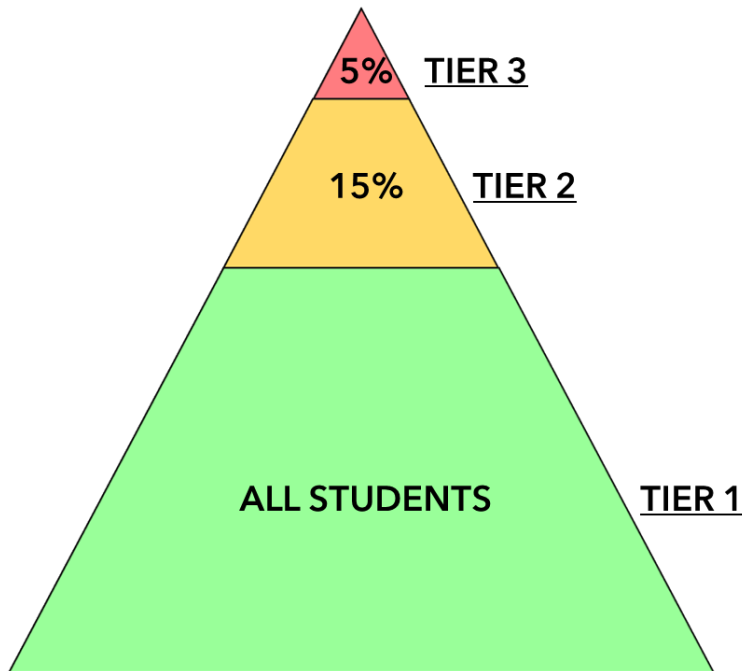
- Competency and Standards-Based Curriculum
- Classroom Lessons
- School-Wide Programs
- Screening Tools and Data Review

School counselors identify students in need of additional support and deliver Tier 2 interventions

- Individual Meetings, Small Groups
- We should not pathologize “needing extra help”
- Targeted Intervention ≠ Treatment!

School counselors provide short-term, solution-focused Tier 3 interventions, and refer students in need of higher levels of support to the appropriate service provider

- Highly Individualized Interventions
- Referral for Evaluation for Special Education
- Referral for Mental/Behavioral Health Evaluation/Treatment



Student Support Infrastructure: *School Counselors*

The basic infrastructure to support student mental health already exists in most Pennsylvania schools -

school counselors

This cost-effective infrastructure requires state support in two key areas:

1. Ensuring all students in all schools have adequate access to it
2. Ensuring it operates as it should, in line with best practices for school counselors

School Counselors – A Cost Effective Infrastructure for Student Support

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends a student to school counselor ratio of 250:1



Research demonstrates that lower student-to-school-counselor ratios are associated with higher student achievement measures, better graduation rates, and lower disciplinary incidents (Lapan et al., 2012; Goodman-Scott et al., 2018; Parzych et al., 2019)

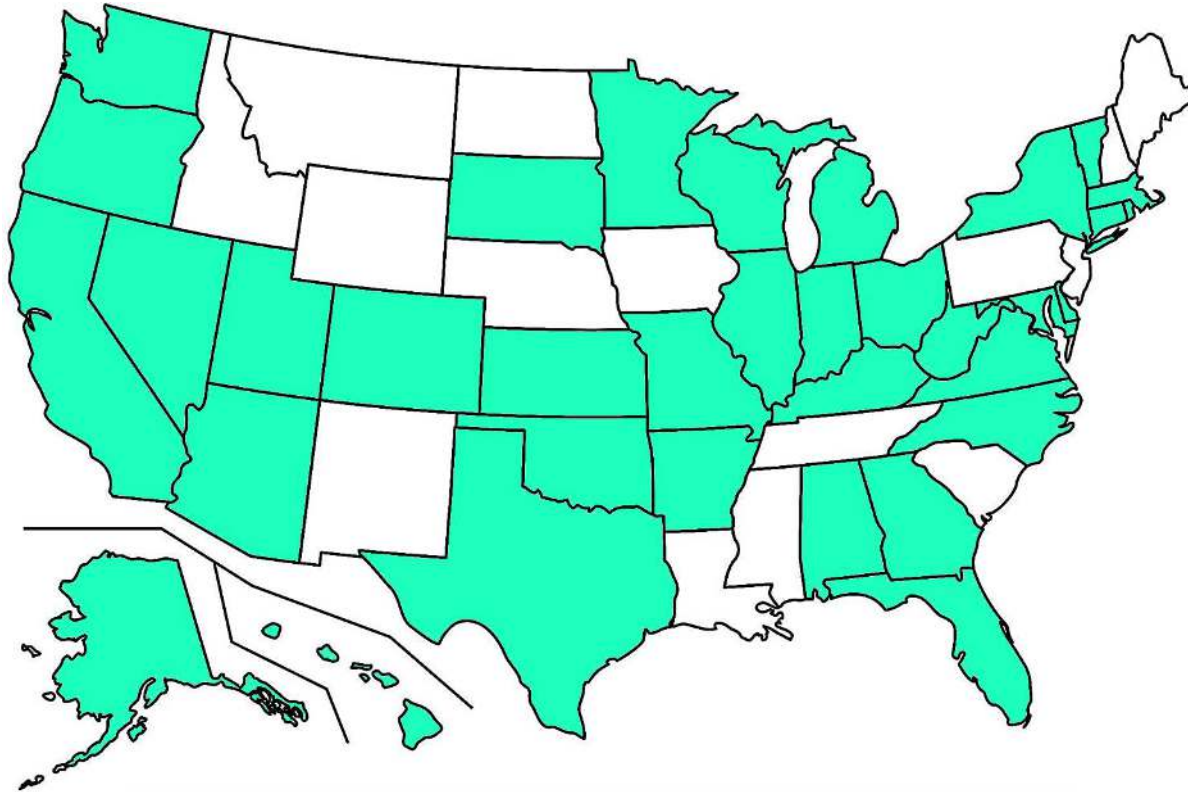
Nationally, school counselor ratios are significantly higher, with the most recent comparison estimating a national average ratio of 430:1 (ASCA, 2020)

ASCA reports that Pennsylvania's ratio for the 2018-2019 school year was 369:1 (ASCA, 2020)

IDEAL CASELOAD

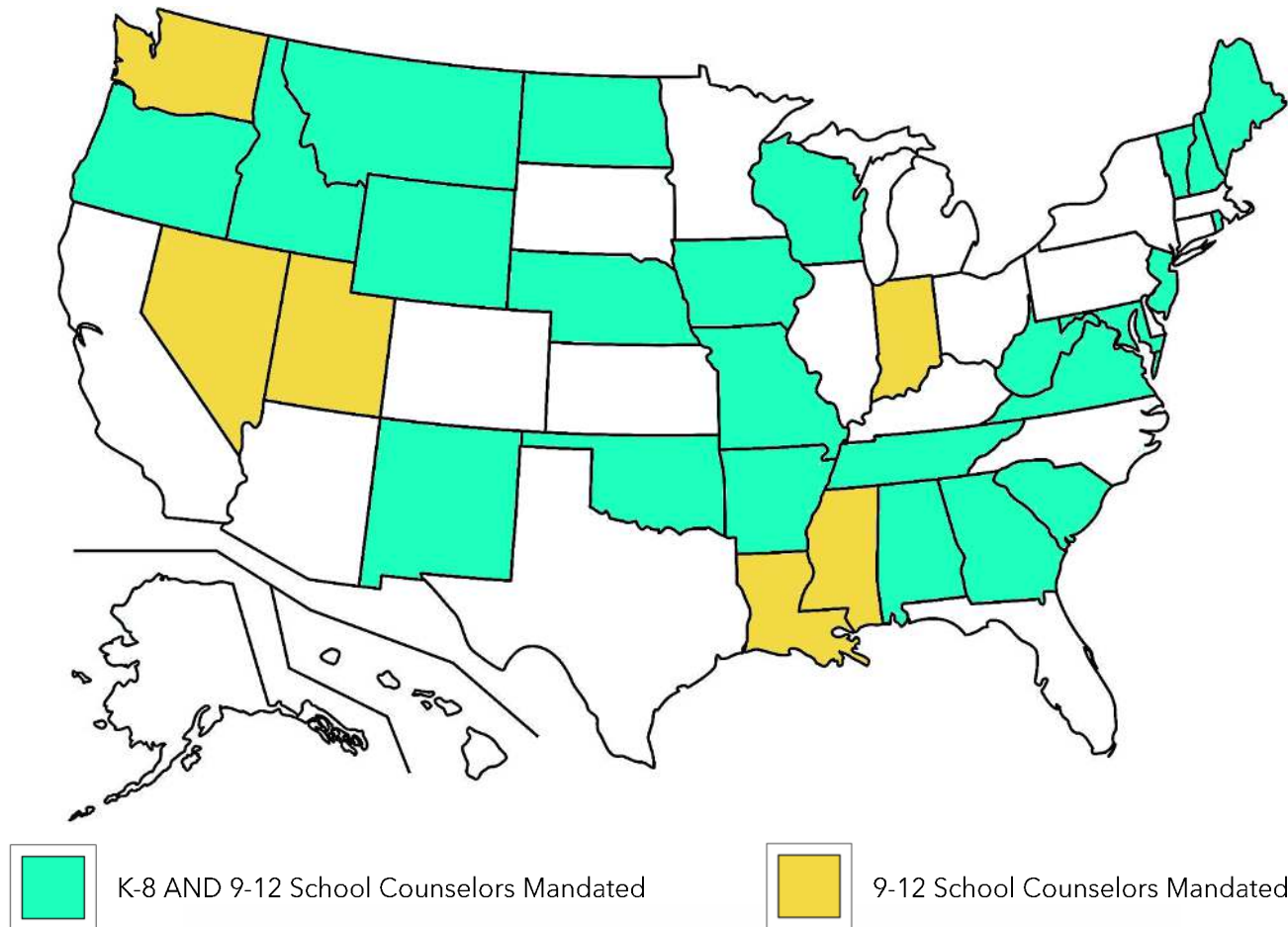
250 students per school counselor





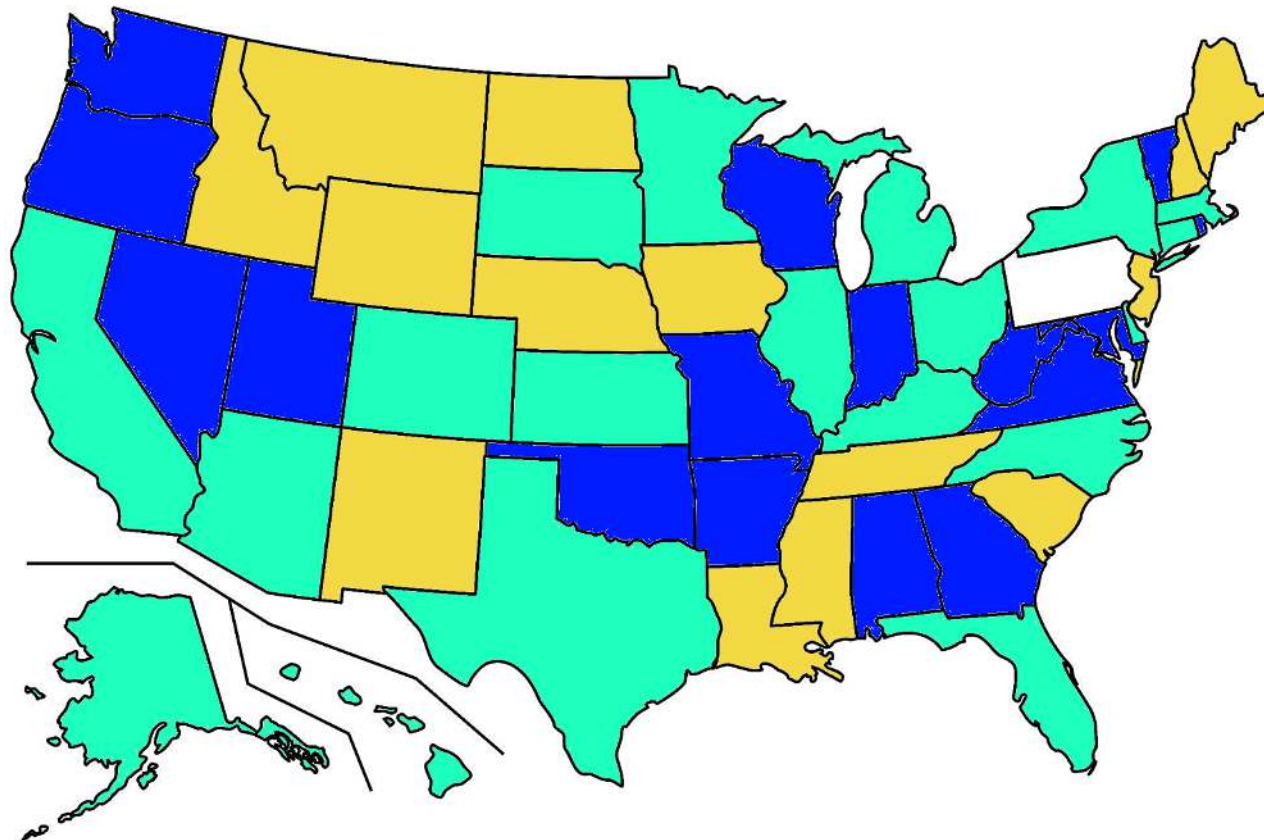
35 states already require
comprehensive school counseling programs
in public school districts

(American School Counselor Association)



30 states already mandate
school counselors in public school districts

(American School Counselor Association)



State Comprehensive School Counseling Plan/Framework



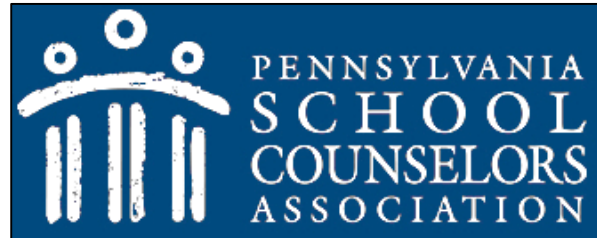
Partial/Full K-12 School Counselor Mandate



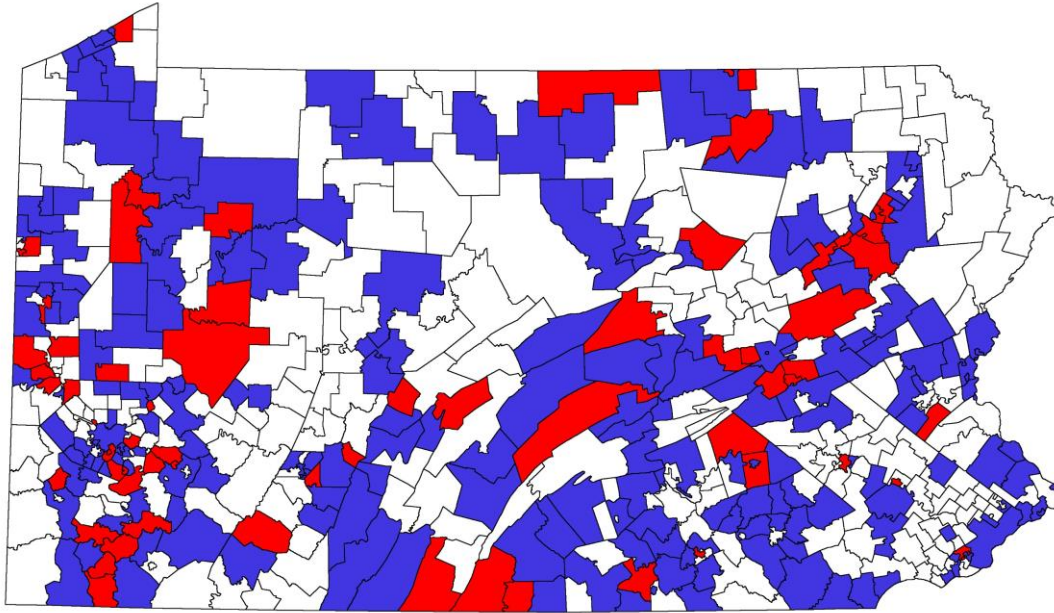
Both

Pennsylvania is the **ONLY** state
that does not have either a state plan
for comprehensive school counseling services
or mandated school counseling positions in schools.

(American School Counselor Association)



SCHOOL COUNSELING IN PENNSYLVANIA



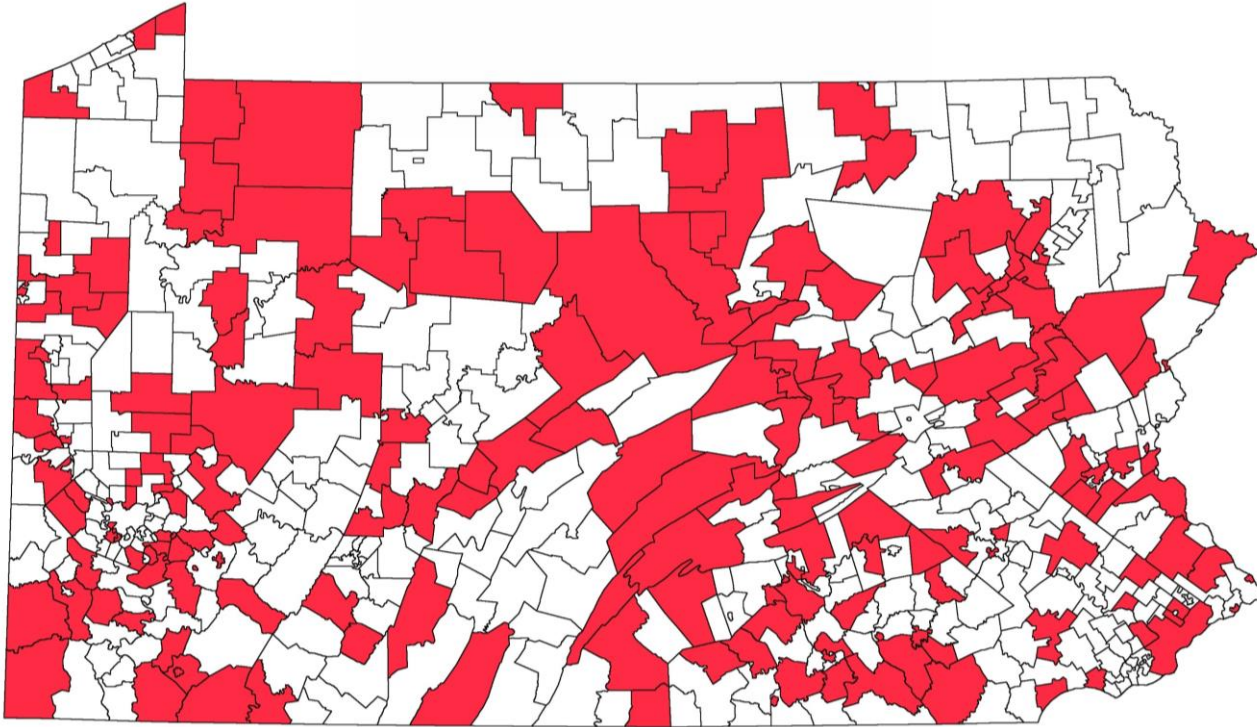
1:377

Median Student to School Counselor Ratio
in PA Public School District Buildings

More than 50% of PA Public School Districts
have average ratios of **1:350 or higher**

1 in 10 PA Public School Districts
have average ratios of **1:500 or higher**

45%



223 school districts (45%) have buildings served by school counselors who are assigned to multiple buildings, impacting over a quarter of a million students, mostly elementary school children.

Recent PA Legislation Impacting the Work of **Schools**



Academic Standards and Graduation Requirement Changes

(2008, 2010, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020)

- State Assessment Administration
- Housing and Monitoring Student Achievement
- Keystone Remediation
- HS Graduation Pathways
- Years of Delayed Implementation



Truancy Law Updates (Act 138 of 2016; Act 139 of 2018)

- Student Attendance Improvement Plans (SAIPs)
- Reducing Habitual Truancy
- Expanding Compulsory Age Attendance



Career Readiness and Chronic Absenteeism (2015, 2018)

- Career Readiness (1/3 of Public Facing School Dashboard)
- Career Artifacts and Student Portfolio Maintenance
- Chronic Absenteeism a Measure of School Quality



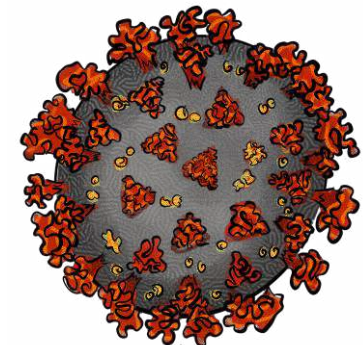
Suicide Awareness and Prevention (Act 71 of 2014)

- Adoption of Youth Suicide Awareness and Prevention Policies
- Professional Development
- Curriculum on Awareness and Prevention



School Safety and Trauma (Act 44 of 2018; Act 18 of 2019)

- Implementation of Safe2Say Something Anonymous Reporting
- Mandating Trauma-Informed Approaches and Training in Educational Entities
- PA-MTSS Framework



...and this was all pre-COVID-19

School Counselors – An Existing Infrastructure for Student Support

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

The PA School Safety Task Force (2018) identified several key areas that require a multidisciplinary approach to prevention, intervention, and response – social isolation and bullying, comprehensive social and emotional education throughout a student’s K-12 education, and insufficient staffing levels for both physical and mental health services.

School counselors are trained to **address student social and emotional development, as well as mental health assessment and response.**



SCHOOL SAFETY TASK FORCE REPORT

Top 5 PA Safe2Say Something Report Types (2019)
Bullying/Cyber Bullying
Cutting/Self-Harm
Suicide/Suicidal Ideation
Depression/Anxiety
Drug Use

Safe2Say Something is an anonymous reporting service for students to report unsafe or concerning activities in schools, implemented in 2019 by the PA Attorney General’s Office.

Students have primarily used this service to report concerns about their mental health.

School Counselors – An Existing Infrastructure for Student Support



STUDENT CAREER READINESS

School counselors are also a primary vehicle for **college and career advisement and planning.**

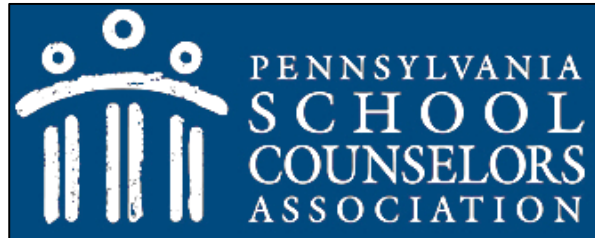
These domains of student learning are now a part of the Future Ready PA Index, which is a public dashboard of school quality and performance.

"School counselors are a critical part of Pennsylvania's vision to help all students translate their interests and aspirations into tangible college and career plans and choices.

However, **many school counselors are stretched thin, juggling several responsibilities and significant case loads, and are often isolated in their work."**

-Pennsylvania State Consolidated Plan, Every Student Succeeds Act, 2019 (p.96)

As COVID-19 has disrupted not only the educational experiences of students, but also the economy and workforce into which they are headed, the need for school counselors to be able to focus their work has never been greater.



HOW DO WE IMPROVE?

GUARANTEEING ACCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS

GUARANTEEING SCOPE OF PRACTICE FOR ALL SCHOOL COUNSELORS

School Counselors – A Cost Effective Infrastructure for Student Support

67%

Pennsylvania students have 67% of the school counselor positions needed to meet staffing recommendations.

Number of School Buildings (School Districts)	2,690
Number of PA Students	1,557,144
School Counselors Needed for 250:1 Ratio	6229
School Counselors Assigned to Buildings (SY 19-20)	4195
Total School Counselors Needed	2034

**This infrastructure already exists in schools.
We just need to guarantee this extends to all students in every school.**

School Counselors – An Existing Infrastructure for Student Support



The ASCA National Model, which outlines best practices for school counselors and school counseling programs, recommends that **80% of a school counselor's time be spent in direct services to students.**

While school counselors are willing team players in the overall functioning of a school system, these non-school counseling duties interrupt and detract from the professional service that they provide to students and families.



Pennsylvania does **not** currently have a defined scope of practice for school counselors. Unlike classroom teachers, who are hired to perform defined classroom duties, school counselors are often used as utility players in a school building – covering classes when teachers are absent and no subs are available, coordinating standardized testing, filling in on duty rotations, or serving as data and records clerks. They sometimes function as pseudo-administrators, tracking student attendance and administering discipline.

Providing a scope of practice would **help school counselors advocate for appropriate roles and responsibilities in their buildings** so that students and families get the services school counselors are uniquely qualified to provide.

School Counselors – A Cost Effective Infrastructure for Student Support

\$150 MILLION

Number of School Buildings	2,690
Number of Students	1,557,144
School Counselors Needed for 250:1 Ratio	6229
School Counselors Assigned to Buildings (SY 19-20)	4195
Total School Counselors Needed	2034
Median PA School Counselor Salary (SY 19-20)	\$73,130

It would take approximately **\$150 million** to hire the total school counseling positions needed in PA, which is **approximately 1% of the total state appropriations for education** for the 19-20 school year.

This investment would impact each district differently based on their specific staffing needs and salary schedules as determined by local CBAs.

Student Support Infrastructure: *School Counselors*

Providing school districts clear guidance on the scope of practice, role, and expertise (best practices) of school counselors

Providing funding for schools that require additional school counselors (based on student to counselor ratios) to support the mental health needs of students

Establishing a school counseling coordinator at PDE



The basic infrastructure to support student mental health already exists in most Pennsylvania schools -

**school
counselors**

This cost-effective infrastructure requires state support in two key areas:

1. Ensuring all students in all schools have adequate access to it
2. Ensuring it operates as it should, in line with best practices for school counselors