

BC School Counsellors Association


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Legal and Ethical Guidelines

Preamble

The British Columbia School Counsellors Association (BCSCA) is a Professional Specialist Association encouraged and supported by the B.C. Teachers' Federation. BCSCA teacher-counsellors are actively engaged in providing school counselling services in British Columbia schools in some or all of the following capacities:

- **Counsellor**
- **Consultant**
- **Coordinator**
- **Curriculum Specialist**
- **Catalyst**

The **Counsellor** provides both an intervention and a prevention service for developmental, personal, social, educational, and career-related issues.

The **Consultant** works with school-based teams, subject teachers, resource teachers administrators, professionals, and para-professionals to develop programs across the curriculum to assist students in meeting their needs and to show the relevance of in-school studies and future educational and career opportunities.

The **Coordinator** assists in the coordination of services to students from within schools from an inter-ministerial approach, and links the school with the community, business, industry, social service agencies, and other educational institutions, to ensure that student needs are met and to enhance the smooth transition of students from one environment to another.

The **Curriculum Specialist** teaches curriculum from within the social/emotional and the social responsibility areas for the Primary, Intermediate and Graduation programs. The breadth of these programs falls within the Personal Planning Curriculum.

The **Catalyst** identifies students at risk and in conjunction with school-based teams, ensures that programs are in place to meet their needs, modifies programs, trains teacher/mentors and peer helpers, and initiates liaison with parents/guardians, social workers, and other support staff.

The BCSCA Constitution states that the objectives of the organization are:

- To promote school counselling in the province of B.C.
- To define and promote professional standards and qualifications for teacher-counsellors.
- To define and promote the role of the teacher-counsellor.
- To encourage the information of chapters in to order establish a strong professional organization.
- To promote professional growth in school counselling.
- To support research in counselling.
- To publish periodicals in pursuit of the purposes of the association.
- To define and promote adequate school counselling facilities.

As set out in the BCSCA role description for teacher-counsellors, members are expected to have an acceptable level of professional training and experience. Teacher-counsellors must possess a professional teaching certificate, and be full members of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation and College of Teachers.

It is preferable that teacher-counsellors possess a Master's degree in counselling Psychology or a related field from an institution recognized by the College of Teachers, with training in school counselling theory and techniques. Teaching experience is vital. To this end, it is incumbent upon each member to maintain professional standards and to seek opportunities for continued professional growth.

Teacher-counsellors are responsible for having knowledge of the laws relevant to counselling issues, and their counselling practices should be consistent with these laws. One obligation of membership is that members support the aims and objectives of the Association.

Primary Responsibility

A teacher-counsellor's first responsibility is to act in the best interest of the students. Teacher-counsellors subscribe to the following basic tenets of the counselling process from which professional responsibilities are derived.

- Each person has the right to respect and dignity as a unique human being and to counselling services without prejudice as to person, character, belief, or practice.
- Each person has the right to self-direction and self-development.
- Each person has the right of choice and the responsibility for decisions reached.
- Each person has the right to privacy and, thereby, the right to expect the counsellor-client relationship to comply with all law, policies, and ethical standards pertaining to confidentiality.

Professional Standards

Teacher-counsellors are expected to seek opportunities to continue their own professional growth and to work towards the improvement of their profession.

Teacher-counsellors expect ethical behavior from their professional associates; teacher-counsellors will attempt to rectify unethical behavior on the part of their associates and will assist colleagues in observing ethical practices related to the work of the teacher-counsellor.

Teacher-counsellors, as employees of a school or other institution, accept policies and principles of the institution as a condition of employment unless they conflict with professional standards and ethics.

Teacher-counsellors offer professional services only through the context of a professional relationship.

Confidentiality

Information received through the counselling relationship is confidential. The teacher-counsellor regards such information as confidential and does not voluntarily divulge such information without the student's prior consent.

This statement applies equally to interview notes, tapes of interviews, test data, and any other documents used to assist in the counselling process. Notes are to be kept as part of the counsellor's record, but not part of the records kept in the office of the school.

Exceptions:

1. **CONSENT:** With the consent of the student, the teacher-counsellor may divulge information received through the counselling relationship.
2. **POTENTIAL HARM:** If behavior of the student threatens potential harm to him/herself or another person, the teacher-counsellor shall take appropriate action to protect the student and/or the other person.
3. **CHILD PROTECTION:** A teacher-counsellor who has reason to believe that a child is or might be in need of protection shall forthwith report the information to the appropriate authorities in accordance with legal obligations pursuant to child protection legislation.
4. **CONSULTATION AND COLLABORATION:** A teacher-counsellor may consult and collaborate with other professionals for purposes of more effectively helping the student. The teacher-counsellor shall share only such information that will serve the best interests of the student.
5. **LEGAL REQUIREMENTS:** A teacher-counsellor may be required to provide records in compliance with the law.

Landmark case and outcome regarding a school counsellors and your notes regarding a student. [more info](#)

Teacher-Counsellor----Counsellor Relationship

A teacher-counsellor shall inform students of the purposes, goals, techniques, and specific policies under which they may receive counselling, at or before the time when the counselling relationship is entered.

Such information includes concerns about confidentiality, legal restraints on the counsellor, and the possible necessity for consulting with other professionals.

Teacher-counsellors are obliged to respect the integrity and promote the welfare of counselees with whom they are working.

In group situations, particularly those oriented to self-understanding or growth, the teacher-counsellor is obligated to make clear to the group members the purposes, goals, techniques, rules of procedures, and limitations that may affect the continuance of the relationship.

In providing orientation to prospective group participants, especially when the emphasis is on self-understanding and growth through self-disclosure, the teacher-counsellor is responsible for ensuring that the purposes of the group situation are appropriate to the needs of the counsellee.

Teacher-counsellors take into account and show prudent regard for the social codes and moral expectations of the communities within which they work.

Records of the counselling relationship, including interview notes, test data, correspondence, tape recordings, and other documents retained by the teacher-counsellor, are to be considered professional information for use in counselling, research, and teaching of teacher-counsellors, but always with the full protection of the counselees. These records shall be available to the counsellee upon request, and the teacher-counsellor shall assist the counsellee to interpret them. Tape recording or filming of an interview shall not be done without the knowledge and consent of the counsellee.

Teacher-counsellors, where they feel that it would be in the best interests of the counsellee to do so, will relate confidential information to parents, guardians, teachers, or school administrators only with the knowledge and consent of the counsellee.

Teacher-counsellors, when reporting research results and supporting data, will not reveal the identity of the persons used as subjects without their express permission.

Teacher-counsellors shall carefully consider requests by prospective employers, private investigating agencies, or other persons, for confidential information about counselees. Such information will only be provided upon written consent of the counselees or their parents (where the counselees are minors.)

Referrals

Teacher-counsellors reserve the right to consult in confidence with any other professionally-competent, in the area of counselling, person about their counselees. In choosing professional consultants, teacher-counsellors must avoid placing the consultant in a conflict of interest situation.

Teacher-counsellors recognize their boundaries of competence and provide only those services and use only those techniques for which they are qualified by training or experience.

Teacher-counsellors must be knowledgeable about referral resources.

Whenever possible and appropriate, the teacher-counsellor makes referrals with the knowledge and consent of the student. At all times, the teacher-counsellor should be acting in the best interests of the student.

Programs and Services

A teacher-counsellor shares with other educators the responsibility for establishing and maintaining counselling and guidance programs which are responsive to the needs of students.

Our sincere thanks to the Ontario School Counsellors Association and the Manitoba School Counsellors Association for granting us permission to incorporate concepts and language from their Association's Legal and Ethical Guidelines.

DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- BCTF Code of Ethics, 1992
- Guidelines for Ethical Behavior of the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association, May 1989
- American School Counsellors' Association, Ethical Standards for School Counsellors, 1992
- An Ethical-Legal Handbook for School Counsellors, Ontario School Counsellors' Association, 1990