ASCA Position Statements & YOUR School Counseling Program

As you prepare for this year constructing a calendar, reviewing data, setting SMART goals and meetings with your principal & advisory board, take a moment and familiarize yourself with the position statements located on the ASCA website.

These hidden gems have been developed by like-minded school counselors & counselor educators who have a passion for clarifying support on issues pertinent to school counselors. Topics range from safe schools and crisis response to suicide prevention & awareness.

The position statements will help you navigate through a variety of gray topics and will give you the support you need to successfully advocate. School counselors in all stages of developing a comprehensive school counseling plan should take a look and keep them handy for those moments in the profession when they can be useful.

On that note, with our September newsletter theme focusing on Suicide Prevention & Crisis Plans, please turn to pages 2 & 3 for pertinent information on these topics from two of our board members, Anna Eidem & Jennifer Kirchner. All the best in your respective school districts across South Dakota as you begin another year doing work that matters!

Julie

SDSCA Mentor Program

Are you new to the school counseling profession or new to South Dakota? Apply to participate in SDSCA’s Mentor Program by clicking here. This membership benefit can help connect you with an experienced school counselor who can share wisdom, resources, and experience with you! If you are interested in serving as a mentor, please click here.

Questions? Contact Mentoring Chair Danielle Schonebaum at: Danielle.Schonebaum@k12.sd.us

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AND MORE!
This month is suicide prevention awareness month and I hope you take the time to review what you can do about suicide prevention in your schools. This is a time for us to share resources and stories, as well as promote suicide prevention awareness. —Anna Eidem

As school counselors, we know all too well, how deaths by suicide affect our families, schools, communities, state and nation. Based on most recent data, suicide is the 9th leading cause of death in South Dakota and the 2nd leading cause of death in people ages 15-44. There are several resources available and tools to use and I will share some from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP).

One way to get involved in suicide prevention is to advocate at the local, state and national level. Building relationships and staying connected to our state and national legislators’ gets the message across that we need to make suicide prevention a priority right now. By signing up as advocate, you will be joining thousands of other volunteers to prevent suicide. You will receive emails from the AFSP Public Policy Team in Washington, DC that are updated on the latest policy news and events, and action alerts so you can know when and how to take action on the policy issues you care about. To sign up go here: https://afsp.org/our-work/advocacy/become-an-advocate/#/signup/go/id/93F69D0B-A17F-71F6-65506749AE8AC29C/

There are several resources specifically for schools including the following:

More Than Sad: https://afsp.org/our-work/education/more-than-sad/ (FREE curriculum to school districts, complements of SD Chapter of AFSP)
It’s Real: College Students and Mental Health: https://afsp.org/our-work/education/real-college-students-mental-health/ (Contact the SD Chapter of AFSP for this program)

Upcoming Out of the Darkness Community Walks

9/22/2018: Sioux Falls & Black Hills
9/29/2018: Milbank You can register for the walks here
10/4/2018: Volunteer Orientation Training

If you are interested in learning more about AFSP-SD, click here.

Mark Your Calendar:


❖ November 2 & 3– SDSCA presents the 10th Annual Counselor Connections Workshop in Brookings. Click here to register.

❖ February 2019– SDCA Day on the Hill in Pierre. Look for details coming soon about this advocacy opportunity with state lawmakers.

❖ February 4th-8th– National School Counseling Week! Start planning to celebrate and advocate for you, your program, and the profession by clicking here to visit ASCA’s NSCW page!

❖ May 2-4– 2019 SDCA Conference in Sioux Falls. More information coming soon to the SDCA Website.

Creating a Crisis Plan after Tragedy

Tragedy Strikes  In the fall of 2015, Yankton High School had just that. An unthinkable tragedy. One of our students had died by suicide. Those first couple days are still a blur, but as a counseling team, a staff, a school, and as a district, we served our grieving students in their time of need. Reflecting back, we also learned a lot about how to assist our students and staff during a crisis.

As the months passed following that day, our counseling department started to look at our old crisis plan. The one nobody had needed to look at for so long. While every district has a crisis plan suitable to their needs, we found that several pieces of our document helped take the thinking out of the equation. Our crisis team could assemble and respond with a single phone call instead of asking the question, “What do we do now?”

Crisis Team  One of the first few questions we asked was, who is on our crisis team? Are there certain community members that may help with those affected by the death of this student? Who is privy to the facts of the situation? During a crisis, I have found having the facts invaluable in order to quell the rumors and side talk that simply are not true. As we know, many times, students have half of the story, especially when emotions are high.

Roles and duties  In order to carry out an action plan effectively, we decided that certain team members would have duties that would facilitate another team member’s duties to start, almost like a calling tree. For example, our Superintendent is usually the first person to know a tragedy has occurred. He then notifies the crisis team and we meet at a designated time and place to discuss our action plan and emergency checklist. After that, the action plan is dictated based on the school and its resources, the age of the student, the family’s wishes, and the facts of the situation.

Emergency Checklist  One of pieces we felt important was a checklist of items that needed to be taken care of once the team had confirmation that the death of a student had occurred. For example, did the student ride the bus and the driver needed to be informed, did the student have a desk he or she sat in; or did the family have specific wishes we needed to be aware of? Many of the items on our checklist are decided at our initial meeting before the action plan goes into effect.

Action plan  Our action plan was divided into “Day 1” and “Day 2”. During Day 1, the crisis team would meet early in the morning prior to a mandatory staff meeting. The team would discuss the emergency checklist, the facts, review team member responsibilities, and identify those students most affected. If possible, counselors would meet with identified students prior to an announcement being made to the student body. During the course of the day counselors would respond to students as the need arose. Once school had ended, the team would reconvene to discuss the day, concerns, and compile a list of students served for reference, and highlight self-care.

Day 2 refers to the next day, but also the path to move forward after tragedy. Counselors would continue to meet with students as needed making note of special days and anniversaries that could trigger those affected students. The school would support the family as they needed and later on, discuss a memorial if appropriate. None of these pieces are easy, but as counselors our role is to support those in need.

It’s Not Too Late…

September 28-30th ACA Midwest Institute for Leadership Training: “Confidence, Attitude & the Inner Voice of a Leader“. Join with leaders from across the Midwest to learn new leadership skills and hone existing ones!

Register here

Counselor Connections 2018

SDSCA is pleased to present the 10th annual Counselor Connections Workshop, November 3rd and 4th on the SDSU Campus in Brookings! Counselor Connections is a professional development event presented by school counselors, for school counselors.

Click here to register today!

This year promises to have pertinent school counselor sessions to help you in your job setting on the following topics: ACES, zones of regulation, mindfulness, advocacy, leadership, confidentiality & privilege, advocacy & opioid use intervention to name a few!

A block of rooms has been reserved for November 1 & 2 at the Brookings Hampton Inn & Suites. You can reserve online or call 605-697-5232. *Block held until Thursday, October 11th and then released to the general public.

We hope you are able to join us in November!

NEXT MONTH:

Our ASCA partnered newsletter explores success measures!

Eleven SD school counselors attended the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Conference in Los Angeles, California in July. We spent time learning, networking and representing our state! Shortly after this, members of the state leadership team gathered in Presho for a quick 24 hours at our summer board retreat creating a strategic plan, budget and goals for the upcoming year as a state school counselor organization. The strategic plan is found here. Board Member contact info here.