



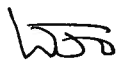
# PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA


DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION | June St. Clair Atkinson, Ed.D., *State Superintendent*

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May 26, 2016

**TO:** Directors, Exceptional Children Programs  
Lead Administrators, Charter Schools  
Directors of School Counseling

**FROM:** William J. Hussey, Director   
Exceptional Children Division

Tiffany Perkins, EdD., Director   
K-12 Curriculum and Instruction

**SUBJECT: School Counselor's Role in the Provision of Related Services for Students with Disabilities**

Questions and concerns regarding the school counselor's role in the provision of counseling as a related service for students with disabilities are often sent to the Department of Public Instruction, e.g. *Can the school counselor be written into an IEP to provide counseling as a related service?*

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and its implementing regulations specify that related services means developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education and includes counseling services. According to IDEA, counseling services mean services provided by qualified social workers, psychologists, school counselors, or other qualified personnel.

Each child's IEP Team has the responsibility of determining the related services that a child needs in order to benefit from special education. Federal and state laws and regulations require that the IEP reflect the special education and required related services that a child with a disability receives. However, there is no requirement for the service providers to be noted by name in the IEP. When it is determined that counseling services are needed as a related service in order for a child with a disability to benefit from special education, school personnel must determine the best qualified service provider to deliver the services.

IEP Teams are to use current, valid and reliable data when making decisions about the special education of related services that a child needs. Counseling services as related services are provided solely to assist the student to benefit from special education. They are not designed to address therapeutic or clinical needs.

School counselors should render services to student with disabilities just as they do for all other students. They advocate for all students and provide services to students with disabilities comparable to those academic, career and personal social counseling services provided to all students through a comprehensive school counseling program. These services do not include long-term, ongoing counseling. For school counselors to be able to provide these comprehensive services as defined in the NCDPI Professional Standards for School Counselors and G.S. 115C-316.1, they should follow the best practice guideline of referring to outside providers any students whose counseling needs would require more than

**EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN DIVISION / K-12 CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**  
301 North Wilmington Street, Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-2825 | (919) 807-3969 | Fax (919) 807-3243

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four to six consecutive counseling sessions. Additionally, school counselor to student ratios in comprehensive school counseling programs do not provide the capacity for ongoing individual long-term counseling services, putting the school at-risk for having to provide compensatory services when the counselor is unable to meet with the student as often as the IEP states.

Thank you for your continued work with all students. If there are questions or concerns related to school counseling services, please contact Cynthia Floyd, NCDPI School Counseling Consultant, at 919.807.3931 or [cynthia.floyd@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:cynthia.floyd@dpi.nc.gov) ; or Carol Ann M. Hudgens, NCDPI Policy, Monitoring and Audit Section Chief, at 919-807-3976 or [carolann.hudgens@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:carolann.hudgens@dpi.nc.gov).

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