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## ***Chapter 2***

### ***Scope of Activities***

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## Scope of Activities

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In this chapter:

- Scope of activities for school counsellors
  - Vignettes of typical daily activities
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Comprehensive and developmental guidance and counselling programming includes two distinct yet interrelated components: programmatic areas (activities with student contact) and structural areas (activities without student contact). Within these two areas, the scope of counsellor activities includes

### *Programmatic Area*

- Counselling: therapeutic, healing processes that address development needs
- Prevention: responsive processes that combine instruction and counselling to avert, minimize, or address potential areas of risk
- Guidance Education: information giving and instruction to increase awareness, skill, and knowledge

### *Structural Area*

- Coordination: planning, consulting, referring, revising, and advocating to address school needs

Much of the work of school counsellors, such as professional consultation, referrals, and counselling, occurs in confidential settings. These activities are essential to an effective guidance and counselling program. Classroom-based education, public relations, and activities such as awareness campaigns (e.g., addictions, bullying, career, post-secondary opportunities) are also the responsibility of school counsellors. Clarifying what is within the scope of activities of school counsellors in general and what is beyond their scope specifically is important to ensuring that the needs of the school community are addressed efficiently and effectively.

Although there are differences in the responsibilities of school counsellors in Early, Middle, and Senior Years schools due to specific developmental needs, community needs, available resources, and the training of the school counsellor, the differences are mostly found in “how” the counsellor addresses the needs of the students, rather than “what” the counsellor addresses.

A vignette of a school counsellor’s typical day in each of an Early Years, Middle Years, and Senior Years school is presented below to illustrate the comprehensive nature of guidance and counselling services and the similarities and unique features within each context.

### EARLY YEARS VIGNETTE

8:30 – 9:00	Bus duty Greet students Transition Kindergarten student affected by anxiety disorder to classroom setting
9:00 – 9:30	Counsel and pre-teach this morning’s Grade 3 personal safety lesson to student with history of abuse
9:30 – 10:00	Play therapy with student affected by recent house fire
10:00 – 10:30	Grade 3A classroom personal safety lesson (team-teaching 25 students)
10:30 – 10:45	Recess
10:45 – 11:15	Social Skills Group (6 students)
11:15 – 11:45	Record keeping, file management, parent telephone contacts, lesson preparation for bullying awareness
11:45 – 12:00	Transition student affected by anxiety disorder out of classroom and to parent’s care prior to hallway movement for lunch
12:00 – 12:30	Lunch
12:30 – 12:50	Informal discussions with teachers re: issues or concerns
12:50 – 1:00	Greet afternoon Kindergarten students
1:00 – 1:30	Grade 3B classroom personal safety lesson (team-teaching 23 students)
1:30 – 1:45	Individual counselling: behaviour management
1:45 – 2:00	Individual counselling: anger management
2:00 – 2:30	Conflict resolution: 2 students
2:30 – 2:45	Recess
2:45 – 3:25	Student Support Meeting: coordination and consultation re: 7 students
3:25 – 3:30	Greet students as they depart for the day
3:30 – 4:00	Staff meeting

At the Early Years level, it is particularly important for the school counsellor to be visible by all students each day. Students typically gravitate towards their classroom teacher, and the visibility of the counsellor encourages students to recognize the school counsellor as an additional trusted adult.

### MIDDLE YEARS VIGNETTE

8:30 – 9:00	Meet with concerned parents re: progress of child in coping with loss
9:00 – 9:30	Study Skills/Organization Group Session
9:30 – 10:00	Meeting with school psychologist re: assessment of student with self-harming behaviour Introduce student to school psychologist
10:00 – 10:30	Grade 7 Health classroom self-image and personal hygiene game and follow-up lesson (team-teaching 20 students)
10:30 – 10:45	Recess
10:45 – 11:15	Girls' Group (10 Grade 6 students)—today's focus: strategies for making and coping with losing friendships
11:15 – 11:45	Conflict Managers' Meeting
11:45 – 12:00	Meet with resource teacher re: referral of student with temporary personal/social issues that may impact on goals of IEP
12:00 – 12:30	Lunch
12:30 – 1:00	Lunch Duty
1:00 – 1:30	Grade 5 classroom (23 students)—focus: learning styles and learning differences
1:30 – 2:15	Homework Group (12 grade 8 students)—today's focus: time management and study skills
2:15 – 2:40	Individual counselling: behaviour management
2:40 – 3:10	Individual counselling: divorce-related concerns
3:10 – 3:30	Individual counselling: relationships
3:30 – 4:00	Telephone contacts and paperwork

As students reach Middle Years, the developmental differences in growth and maturity become more evident. Because puberty is a time of change and increasing allegiance to peers, school counsellors typically use the social dynamic to assist in group education and counselling sessions on issues that are related to change. This strategy permits a variety of viewpoints to be raised by peers with peers in a safe, structured environment.

**SENIOR YEARS VIGNETTE**

8:30 – 9:00	Meet with students working on university applications
9:00 – 9:30	Student Aid Group Session
9:30 – 10:00	Crisis Counselling
10:00 – 10:30	Career Education Session—today’s focus: technology and job searches
10:30 – 11:00	Grade 10 Health Education Class—team-teach Addictions Awareness (lesson 2 of 4)
11:00 – 11:15	Individual Counselling: academic counselling
11:15 – 11:45	Peer Helpers’ Meeting
11:45 – 12:00	Consult with 3 teachers re: status of hospitalized student and home-study requirements
12:00 – 12:30	Lunch
12:30 – 1:00	Referral telephone calls
1:00 – 1:30	Grade 9E (27 students)—focus: making wise option choices for Grade 10
1:30 – 2:45	Separation/Loss Group (12 Grade 10/11 students)—today’s focus: managing difficult emotions
2:45 – 3:10	Individual counselling: behaviour management
3:10 – 3:30	Individual counselling: relationships
3:30 – 4:00	Drop-in access at Counselling Centre Planning for Job Fair

Senior Years students are far more independent in their decision-making and information-seeking behaviours. Having unstructured time in the Counselling Centre where students may browse materials and have informal conversations with the school counsellor is helpful. Because peer allegiance is still strong in Senior Years, the use of group strategies for education and counselling is both highly effective and time efficient. Senior Years students often face very adult situations, resulting in an increased need for privacy. This fact is reflected in the increased amount of individual counselling and referrals to other professionals.

## Working Together

Regardless of the school setting, school counsellors, like all school staff, have a set of professional and personal responsibilities that define their scope of activities. School counsellors address the needs of

- students
- parents/guardians
- colleagues and professional associates
- school and community
- self

### Working with Students

The school counsellor's first professional responsibility is to the students. The educational, academic, career, personal, and social needs of all students within the school setting, from Kindergarten to Grade 12, are the focus of guidance and counselling.

To meet the needs of all students, school counsellors plan and deliver programming that is infused into the regular school day.

Because students may have diverse needs that require specific counselling expertise, school counsellors are responsible for recognizing their boundaries of competence and provide only those services and use only those techniques for which they are qualified by training or experience. When their professional assistance cannot adequately meet students' needs, or when students' needs require intensive or long-term counselling beyond what schools may reasonably be expected to provide, appropriate referrals are made.

### Working with Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians play a primary role in the lives of students. Collaboration with parents in the best interest of students is a key activity of school counsellors. School counsellors do not provide family counselling. The focus of school counselling is on the personal, social, educational, and career development of the student.




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*Providing parents, as appropriate, with accurate information in a caring manner is part of working with minors in a school setting.*

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Further information on appropriate educational programming is located at [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/aep/pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/aep/pdf)

The Personal Health Information Act is available at <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p033-5e.php>

Manitoba Pupil File Guidelines are available at [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/policy/mbpupil/](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/policy/mbpupil/).

Providing parents, as appropriate, with accurate information in a caring manner is part of working with minors in a school setting. The open sharing of guidance education activities with the public is separate from the confidential nature of counselling relationships. Working with students to keep parents appropriately informed without breaching confidentiality is an important responsibility. The document *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services* assists school divisions by directing them to create policies that clarify processes related to students with exceptional learning needs. Issues of confidentiality, informed consent, referral, and right to privacy are enshrined in Manitoba law through *The Personal Health Information Act*. School-based policies on issues related to information sharing, consent, and referral should ensure easy student access to assistance and not inadvertently cause a negative impact for the student. These policies assist school counsellors and other educators in the important area of rights and responsibilities for the student, the parent, and the school. (For further information on consent, please see Chapter 7.)

### Working with Colleagues and Professional Associates

Guidance and counselling services are part of a broader delivery system designed to enhance the success of all learners. The school counsellor establishes and maintains an ongoing professional relationship with school staff, clinicians, and other service providers who work with students in the school. Colleagues and professional associates are consulted and provided with professional information related to the well-being of students who are also in their care.

Educational planning and ancillary services are coordinated in the best interest of the student. Information is shared with adherence to appropriate guidelines for confidentiality. School counsellors must work within the limits of the law, within the policies and procedures of school divisions and schools, as well as within the ethical requirements of the associations of which they may be members.

### Working with the School and Community

School counsellors play a dual role of educator (through guidance education activities) and therapist (through counselling activities). This dual role particularly merges when the counsellor is involved in prevention work. All of life's situations interact with each other. For instance, by addressing a student's personal/social needs through counselling, the school counsellor simultaneously teaches resiliency skills and affects the student's readiness for educational challenges. As a result of this interrelationship, the school counsellor supports the integration and contextualization of guidance and counselling services to address school and community needs.



School counsellors are members of the student services team. Like resource teachers and clinicians, they provide support to students with exceptional learning needs. Unlike resource teachers and clinicians, they also provide services to students without exceptional learning needs.



Through the guidance and counselling process, children recover and learn more about themselves, enhancing their capacity to learn.



The school counsellor therefore develops a comprehensive and developmental guidance and counselling program that meets the needs of the specific school population. This development process includes identifying needs, implementing and monitoring programs, as well as adjusting plans based on the developmental needs of students. Regular evaluation of the plan and its implementation are important to ensure the school and community are being well served.

Disseminating information to the school community about the services provided through school guidance and counselling is an important role of the school counsellor. Collaborating with community resource people to increase opportunities for students and making appropriate referrals to community agencies assists students with lifelong learning, transitions, appropriate care and treatment, and success.

### **Working with Attention to Self**

It is important for school counsellors to recognize and discuss with their employing authority the limits of their available time, their training, and their role in the school. By doing so, they enhance communication with administration and other members of the school team and increase opportunities for effective program delivery and management of time, stress, and caseload sizes. It is also important for counsellors to recognize their individual needs for self-care and the advantage of following a personal wellness plan. (See Chapter 8 for further information on self-care.)

Unlike many other full-time teachers, full-time school counsellors typically do not have regularly scheduled classes. Their timetables are flexible to meet the counselling needs of students at various times of the school year while still delivering, and/or collaborating with others for the delivery of, the education and prevention components of the comprehensive guidance and counselling program. School counsellors strive for a balanced approach that allows sufficient time for professional self-reflection, planning, research, referrals, and record keeping. (See Chapter 6 for sample time allotments.)

In many schools, there is a single school counsellor. It is important for counsellors to make professional connections with colleagues who may provide insights, suggestions, and mentoring. It is similarly important for counsellors to reach out to their counselling colleagues to provide support and mentorship.

## ***Chapter Summary***

- The scope of activities for school counsellors is a series of actions that are based on a comprehensive approach to guidance and counselling services. Within that framework, the specific needs of the school community, the training and experience of the counsellor, and the expertise of colleagues and other professionals working with students are taken into account.
- The school counsellor works within his/her training and experience and must limit service delivery to those areas that a school may be reasonably expected to provide to assist students in finding success at school. Students requiring extensive, ongoing therapy or counselling should be referred to external agencies.