
Chapter 3

Counselling – Component 1 of School Guidance and Counselling Services

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School Guidance and Counselling Services
Personal/Social Development
Educational Development
Career Development

PROGRAMMATIC
(student contact)

STRUCTURAL
(non-student contact)

1. COUNSELLING

- Individual counselling
- Small group counselling
- Crisis counselling
- Career counselling
- Referrals
- Peer helping programs

2. PREVENTION

- Primary, secondary, tertiary plans and programs
- Individual assessments
- Coordinated student support team activities
- Student advocacy
- Transitional planning

3. GUIDANCE EDUCATION

- Integrated, developmental student learning outcomes
- Classroom-based guidance instruction and assessment
- Personal/social development
- Educational development
- Career development
- Group guidance activities
- Professional resources
- Post-secondary education and career resource materials and programs

4. COORDINATION

- Professional learning
- Consultation and collaboration
- Program management and operations
- Data-informed decision making
- Advocacy for guidance-related classroom-based learning outcomes
- Needs assessment
- Time allotments and caseload management
- Calendar of activities
- School-based planning

Counselling – Component 1 of School Guidance and Counselling Services

In this chapter:

- Different counselling formats
 - The referral process
 - Peer helping programs
 - Peer mediation
-

Counselling Formats



“[The counselling process] provides a relationship and communications base from which the student can develop understanding, explore possibilities, and initiate change. In this setting, it is the counsellor’s competence that makes positive outcomes possible.” (Gibson and Mitchell, 135)

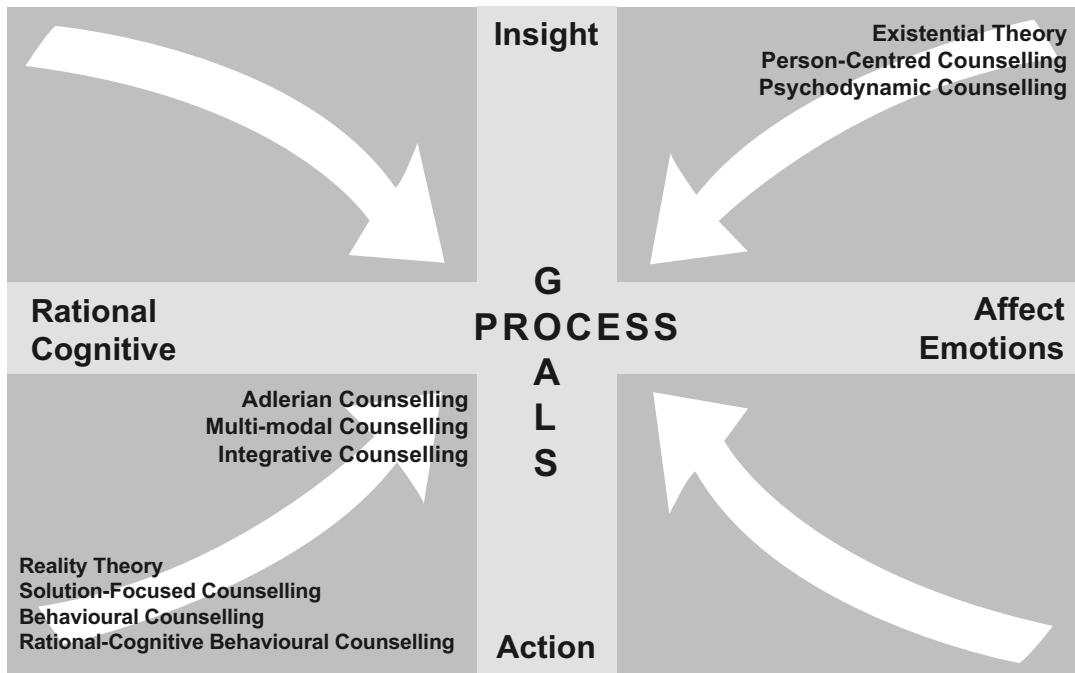
Individual Counselling

The counselling of individual students in schools by school counsellors has evolved quite dramatically over the past 40 years. Individual counselling focused mainly on personal/social issues in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, and the major focus was relationship counselling (now “person-centred” counselling theory). Much emphasis was placed on dealing with students’ feelings and helping them to gain insight into their concerns or issues.

In the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, the focus of individual counselling has become much more action-oriented and solution-focused, with much more time spent on determining realistic plans of action with the student, particularly in the area of behaviour management and mental health issues. Schematically, the recent evolution of individual counselling can be presented as shown in the figure on the next page.

There is much evidence to suggest that as counsellors gain more experience they tend to move towards the centre (Adlerian, multi-modal, and integrative approaches) and increasingly see the combined value of insight, action, emotions, and rational/cognitive approaches (Schulz).

Process and Goals of Individual Counselling



Gerard Egan, in *The Skilled Helper*, contends that individual counselling consists of using specific counselling skills and attitudes to

- help students to tell their stories (issues, concerns)
- help students to understand their stories
- help students to write better stories (plan some action for change)



Additional information on the importance of cultural awareness and personal history is located in Chapter 8.

To be effective, it is important for counsellors in Manitoba schools to understand their personal processes in counselling students and to recognize when movement from one process to another would be helpful, based on the specific needs and contexts of each student. Moving from one process to another more effective process based on the needs of the student requires the knowledge and skill to use a variety of counselling strategies (e.g., cognitive-behavioural therapy, reality therapy, solution-focused counselling, play therapy).

School counsellors provide individual counselling to students based on professional observations, self-referrals, and referrals from peers, parents, and school staff as needed. Counsellors provide short-term supportive services as well as longer-term counselling for ongoing concerns.



Professional ethics require that informed consent is obtained prior to beginning group counselling sessions, and that the counsellor must have specific training in group counselling techniques.

Small Group Counselling

From time to time, school counsellors notice a small group of students who have common needs or concerns that may be addressed most effectively in a group setting where students are able to feel less isolated and where they can benefit from the input of other students facing common issues. These group counselling sessions are intended to support students in making positive decisions and to learn to successfully manage personal concerns. Student participation in group counselling is voluntary and requires parental permission as appropriate. Group topics vary from school to school and from year to year. Some common topics that are well suited to group counselling are

- friendships
- social skills
- anxiety
- family separation/divorce/loss

It is important to note that group counselling is distinct from group guidance. Group counselling is therapeutic and developmental; group guidance is a form of teaching or mode of information delivery.

Career Counselling

Career counselling is an adjunct to general career guidance education sessions. Students often seek additional, personalized support in making decisions related to their future.

Following career guidance education, counselling may take the form of self-assessments, examining interests, personality, skills, values, and beliefs that impact on the types of future activities that the student seeks. For instance, students with limited insight into their personality and preferences may find it difficult to navigate career education resources without personal counselling.

Similarly, students who have made career decisions may require follow-up counselling to assist them with specific requirements such as time management, personalized course selections, and funding opportunities. Transitional planning for students who are exiting the school system is a critical component of career counselling.



Further information on career guidance education is located in Chapter 5.



Issues related to crisis counselling are often referred to clinical staff or external agencies for additional support and consultation. The counsellor continues to provide any necessary supports for the student, if required.

Helpful hint: When counsellors find large portions of their workday are devoted to crisis counselling, consider prevention priorities that may avert crises. See Chapter 4.

Crisis Counselling

When unplanned events and situations arise in the lives of young people, they often seek the assistance and support of the school counsellor. Students rely on the counsellor—who is a trusted adult in the school with knowledge of mental health issues, and skills in relationship building and problem solving—for non-judgmental understanding to help them address immediate and urgent issues that are beyond their limited life experience, coping strategies, or support networks.

In crisis counselling, the role of the school counsellor is to clarify the situation, stabilize the student, and determine whether the concern is within the school counsellor’s training and scope of practice or one that requires referral to clinical staff or an external agency. Typically, urgent crisis counselling needs are referred to skilled professionals outside the school setting for additional support. The following list illustrates some crisis counselling situations:

- child protection/neglect/abuse
- threat making/threat receiving
- dating violence/stalking
- suicidal intentions and actions
- self-harming behaviours
- sexual health
- assault
- trauma/tragedy/loss/grief

Crises are time sensitive and have the potential to escalate quickly into more serious issues. When school counsellors are faced with crisis situations that are beyond their professional skill or that require long-term, intensive service beyond what may be reasonably expected of a school, making referrals for additional support is essential. In some cases (e.g., child protection, abuse, assault), there is a legal requirement to report and refer. In other cases (e.g., suicidal actions, threat receiving), the potential for harm is elevated, and there is an ethical responsibility to consult with appropriate professionals.

As with all forms of counselling, after the crisis has passed, the school counsellor continues to work toward increasing student self-knowledge, strengthening support networks, and increasing resiliency skills to decrease the potential for further crises. Helping students to recognize difficulties early, to work together with their family and friends (when appropriate), to increase communication, and to provide hope are constant goals.

Referrals



Current lists of professionals and agencies are located online at <http://cms00asa1.winnipeg.ca/crc/crc>. This website includes services for Winnipeg and other areas of Manitoba.

Manitoba Healthy Living also lists mental health support agencies at www.gov.mb.ca/healthyliving/mhp.html.

Referrals to external agencies, other professional services, and school division clinical staff are commonplace in Manitoba schools. The number and types of referrals will depend upon the needs of students in a particular school setting, caseload size, scheduling, and the training and experience of the school counsellor.

School divisions typically include clinical staff such as school psychologists and school social workers in their student support teams. These professionals are commonly available to school counsellors for consultation, planning, and referral.

An essential component of effective counselling services is the preparation for the referral process. It is important to work within the school division's referral process and to maintain a current list of professionals beyond the school setting to whom students and families may be referred. Common areas of referral include

- domestic violence services
- child and family services
- adolescent and child mental health services
- psychiatric services
- women's shelters
- crisis hotlines
- health clinics and hospitals
- policing and victim protection services
- mobile crisis units

School counsellors are advised to maintain a professional connection with referral agents to expedite the process for referrals.

Peer Helping Programs*

What is peer helping?

Peer helping is based on the fact that youth often seek out their peers when they are experiencing some frustration, worry, or concern. Children and adolescents want to help each other, yet they often do not know what to do or how to do it. Peer helpers may be trained and supervised to provide a variety of services such as

- listening and understanding
- friendship and support
- decision-making assistance
- tutoring and academic help
- role modelling for younger children
- mediation and conflict resolution (see Peer Mediation on page 34)
- problem-solving assistance
- referral to professionals

Why peer helping?

The use of peer helping programs has increased dramatically over the last fifteen years. Peer programs now exist in schools, colleges and universities, hospitals, agencies, corporations, and senior citizen organizations. Although a variety of terms can be used to describe peer work, the term *peer helping* has gained acceptance as a way of summarizing the different peer programs.

What are the benefits of peer helping?

Peer helping assists children and adolescents to feel capable, understood, and responsible. Peer helping teaches young people decision-making skills to help combat negative peer pressure and provides children and adolescents with communication skills to understand others and be understood. In addition, peer helping enables youth to learn action skills to prevent substance abuse, enhance self-esteem, reduce loneliness, promote health, and support academic and personal achievement.

* Source: Peer Resources. "Peer Helping Brochure and National Standards." <www.peer.ca/broch.html>. (21 Feb. 2007). Adapted with permission.

Peer helping also contributes to the climate of care and respect needed by educational institutions and community organizations to reduce violence, vandalism, truancy, and school dropouts. Peer helping is also a way for communities to demonstrate the value of service to others. By establishing a peer program, schools and community organizations teach children and adolescents how to help, not hurt, others.

What peer helping is not!

Peer helpers do not make decisions for others. They may suggest options or alternatives, identify potential consequences, or share their experiences, but they do not give advice or tell others what to do. Peer helpers do not provide therapy or treatment. Peer helpers are trained to identify the limits of their assistance and are required to refer individuals with concerns beyond their limits to the peer helper supervisor.

How do peer helpers help?

Peer helpers' roles are determined by the type of training provided as well as the school and community needs. Some typical assignments include working as

- peer tutors—helping students learn academic and social skills
- buddies—helping younger or new students make transitions into a new school
- orientation guides—helping students from feeder schools or helping persons new to the community
- referral agents—helping youth get connected to school counselling opportunities and other appropriate services
- peer supporters—helping others sort out concerns, brainstorm ideas, and provide practical help
- role models—helping others learn appropriate behaviours
- outreach workers—reaching out or building connections for youth who feel lonely or troubled

What is the role of the school counsellor in peer helping?

The school counsellor is often the supervisor for the peer helping program. In some schools, supervision is shared with other school team members such as the resource teacher, principal, the student council advisor, or teachers who may be involved in leadership courses in Senior Years schools.

Students become peer helpers using a school-based selection process that is often led by the school counsellor. Students enter the program with the knowledge and the permission of parents.

Most schools that employ a peer helping program as an adjunct to their guidance and counselling program begin with an initial intensive retreat, followed by ongoing mini-sessions throughout the school year. By beginning with a retreat at the beginning of the school year, peer helpers bond as a group and have ample opportunities to gain self-confidence and trust in their supervisor. The nature of a retreat permits enhanced skill training, practice, and retention.

During the school year, the school counsellor may function as supervisor, mentor, and trainer/facilitator for peer helpers as they face new challenges and require further information or skill sets. The counsellor is also a service provider for students who have been referred to the counsellor by the peer helpers in their work.

Peer Mediation

What is peer mediation?

One clear definition follows:

Peer mediation is a voluntary process for resolving conflict. Students who have been trained in mediation assist those students in dispute to reach a mutually agreeable solution. The role of the peer mediators is to help the disputants find a win-win solution. They do not judge or counsel but listen carefully while each person tells her/his side of the story. Then the peer mediators encourage them to come up with ideas to resolve the conflict. (Van Gurp, 32)

Who mediates whom?

Mediators should be the same age/grade or older than the disputants. Do not expect younger students to mediate older ones.

Generating interest

Prior to developing a peer mediation program, it is important to clarify its purpose and limits. Mediation allows a safe environment for empowering students to communicate and resolve conflicts. It is never used when there is a potential for harm or when there is a recognizable power differential between students. Peer mediation does not replace consequences for misbehaviour.

Parents, students, and staff members should be made aware of peer mediation as one of several strategies that may assist in creating a positive learning environment.

Chapter Summary

- School counsellors use a variety of counselling techniques and tools to support students.
- Ethically, school counsellors may only provide group counselling and individual counselling support based on their training and experience. Referral processes are used to address needs that cannot be met by the school counsellor.
- Programs such as peer helping and peer mediation are effective adjuncts to comprehensive guidance and counselling services.

Supportive Resources

Carr, Rey, and Greg Saunders. *The Peer Counselling Starter Kit*. Victoria, BC: Peer Resources, 1970.

de Rosenroll, David, Greg Saunders, and Rey Carr. *The Canadian Mentor Strategy Program Development Resource Kit*. Victoria, BC: Peer Resources, 1993.

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Gladding, Samuel T. *Group Work: A Counseling Specialty*. 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2003.

Harrington, Thomas F. *Handbook of Career Planning for Students with Special Needs*. 3rd ed. Austin, TX: Pro Ed Publishers, 2004.

Schulz, William, Glenn Sheppard, Ron Lehr, and Blythe Shepard. *Counselling Ethics: Issues and Cases*. Ottawa, ON: The Canadian Counselling Association, 2006.

Van Gorp, Hetty. *Peer Mediation: The Complete Guide to Resolving Conflict in Our Schools*. Winnipeg, MB: Portage and Main Press, 2002.

