ISCA supports increased statewide access to and funding for mental health services for youth and their families.

Rationale

It is estimated that 20% of youth have a mental health disorders and most mental health disorders begin in childhood (Child Mind Institute, 2016). Youth whose mental health needs are not adequately met experience more less success in school than their those whose mental health needs are not addressed (Fazel, Hoagwood, Stephan, & Ford, 2014). Those with mental health concerns sometimes experience difficulties achieving the positive educational outcomes educators desire for their students: academic, social-emotional, and career success. An increase in equitable access to and funding for mental health services for Iowa's school-age youth and their families will lead to better outcomes for students.

The School Counselor's Role

❖ School counselors work to establish an environment where all students feel welcome and accepted, and examine school climate data to ensure this occurs

❖ School counselors develop relationships with students and examine student data so they can intervene early and appropriately when students exhibit behaviors of concern

❖ School counselors support student success by encouraging the development of the whole self, including mental well-being, as set forth in the ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors (2014)

❖ As part of a comprehensive school counseling program, school counselors offer classroom lessons that emphasize acceptance of others and the importance of mental health, serving to destigmatize students with mental health disorders

❖ School counselors serve on teams that promote social-emotional learning across the school environment and teams that identify students in need of assistance and provide supports to them, including students with mental health concerns

❖ School counselors are trusted adults who students and families in distress turn to in times of crisis and as such provide referrals to community or school-based mental health providers for students with on-going needs

❖ Because students who have access to school-based mental health services are more likely to seek out mental health care (Child Mind Institute, 2016), school counselors facilitate relationships with community agencies that provide school-based mental health counseling and act as liaisons between community- and school-based mental health providers and the school

❖ School counselors advocate for and address the needs of students with mental health concerns with teachers and administrators

❖ School counselors directly assist students in crisis and work with others to establish protocols for school personnel to use when engaging with students in crisis

❖ School counselors provide resources to others, educating school personnel on signs of potential mental health concerns

Summary

School counselors are a vital part of the continuum of care in addressing student mental health needs, as advocated for by Adelman and Taylor (2006). As such, they are in a position to see the need for mental health care for students and struggle with the inequitable distribution of services across the state, with some communities well-served by mental health care providers and others with far too few resources to meet the need. All students deserve adequate mental health care delivered by qualified mental health professionals.

References

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