

# Collaborative School Mental Health:



## Connecting School Counselors and School Psychologists

School mental health supports have been promoted to address the unmet mental health needs of young people in this country. These supports can include programs, policies, and practices that encompass a continuum of interventions including mental health education, mental health promotion, assessment, problem prevention, early intervention, treatment, and recovery<sup>1</sup>. “Expanded School Mental Health” includes enhancing environments, broadly training and promoting social and emotional learning, preventing emotional and behavioral problems, and identifying and intervening with problems early on<sup>2</sup>. A shared goal for school psychologists and school counselors is to promote academic success for all students by providing access to mental health supports.

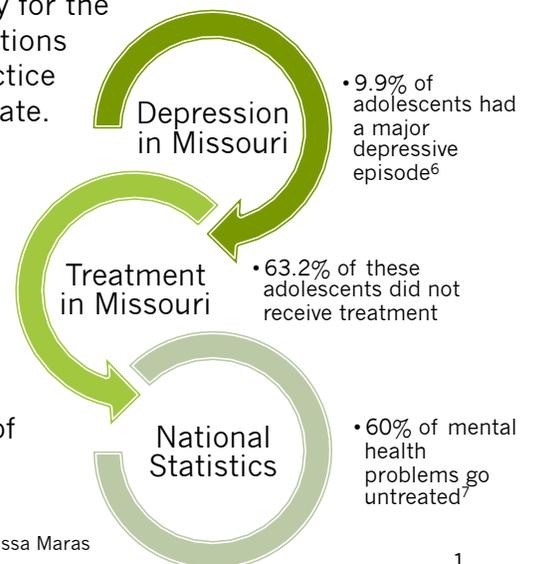
“Mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”<sup>3</sup>

*School mental health efforts are interdisciplinary by nature.*

As each school mental health professional has unique and overlapping areas of expertise, these professionals must work together to achieve the best outcomes for students. Both of the guiding national professional organizations, National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)<sup>4</sup> and the American School Counselor

Association (ASCA)<sup>5</sup> list collaboration as a required activity for the profession. Similarly, both associated state-level organizations (MASP and MSCA, respectively) have adopted these practice models as their own, and encourage professionals to collaborate.

Effective collaboration involves working together in ways that produce actions and valued results. Increasing this effective collaboration among school mental health professionals can address barriers to student learning by increasing access to services. As seen in the graphic to the right, an alarming percent of pervasive mental illnesses in adolescents go untreated. By increasing collaboration and using the strengths of both professions, this number may decrease.



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*This need for collaboration within school mental health is often ignored, which perpetuates challenges in supporting students.*

Collaboration between School Counselors and School Psychologists could capitalize on the strengths and unique aspects of each profession to build a united mental health program.

## Unique Aspects of School Psychology<sup>8</sup>

- Assess and interpret results for special education and services
- Conduct Functional Behavior Assessments for behavior plans
- Utilize evidence-based interventions, screeners for identifying students, and tools for monitoring student progress
- Use of school-wide data regarding academics, behavior, and social-emotional functioning with a systems-level focus

## Unique Aspects of School Counseling<sup>8</sup>

- Use Missouri Model for a Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program
- Deliver universal guidance curriculum addressing personal/social, academic, and career development
- Respond to student crises and concerns through individual or group counseling, consultation, or referral
- Collaborate with other professionals both inside and outside of the building

## Overlap Between School Psychology and School Counseling<sup>8</sup>

- Knowledge of child development and support mental health across grades
- Background knowledge in crisis prevention and intervention
- Consult with teachers, administrators, staff, and parents on supporting students
- Trained in multi-tiered systems of support and facilitating policies and practices for effective learning environments
- Coordinate school-wide practices
- Offer professional development for teachers, parents, and staff

## Areas for Collaboration

Through this overlap between the professions and the unique aspects each profession brings to the table, there are several potential areas for collaboration. First, on an individual level, school counselors can help identify students who would benefit from **psychological assessments** and **screenings** offered by the school psychologist. In the same way, school psychologists could include school counselors in **problem-solving team meetings** with teachers and administrators. This would allow collaboration among professions in order to offer the very best recommendations and resources to the student and family.

Second, on a school community level, school counselors and school psychologists could **share data** and **responsibilities** regarding school-wide interventions. On a smaller level, they could work together to **develop, lead, and evaluate psycho-educational interventions** for specific groups of students. They could also utilize their cumulative understanding of learning theories to **provide suggestions** to teachers and staff on behavior and classroom management strategies.

Third, on an administrative level, school counselors and school psychologists could share in the inevitable burden of **paperwork** that is a necessity within each occupation. They could include each other in the **planning meetings** for upcoming curriculum, and even **attend professional development** seminars and events with the other profession. Accompanying one another to state conventions could be a great opportunity to strengthen the relationship between professionals and understand the strengths and resources that each profession brings to the table.

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## Barriers to Collaboration

While collaboration in school mental health is considered best practice, there are many challenges associated with collaborating that often deter professionals. Such challenges need to be identified and addressed to aid school counselors and school psychologists in collaboration. One large hurdle in Missouri is the lack of School Psychologists in the state as there are only 281 reported School Psychologists compared to 3,185 School Counselors in the state<sup>9</sup>. See below for challenges and potential solutions<sup>10</sup>.

Challenges	Potential Solutions	
<b>Lack of Time</b>	Schedule protected time together	Have goal-oriented and solution focused meetings
<b>Different Perspectives</b>	Learn about the other's perspective	Use differences to enhance services for students
<b>"Turf Protectiveness"</b>	Create clear distinction of roles and responsibilities	Develop a common language around practices
<b>Lack of Administrative Support</b>	Seek administrative support and discuss benefits of collaborating	Review positive outcomes from collaboration with administrators
<b>Unclear Expectations and Lack of Collaboration Training</b>	Identify current practices and set goals for collaboration	Attend professional development opportunities and learn from others' collaboration

## Encouraging Collaboration Across Career Stages:



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## Resources

### Who Are School Psychologists?

This brochure offers information about the field of School Psychology.

[http://www.nasponline.org/resources/handouts/who\\_are\\_school\\_psychologists.pdf](http://www.nasponline.org/resources/handouts/who_are_school_psychologists.pdf)

### School Counselor Role Statement

See this resource for an overview of the roles of School Counselors

<http://schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/home/RoleStatement.pdf>

### Missouri School Counselor Guidance Program

Check out this resource to learn about the Missouri Comprehensive School Counselor Program and find resources on individual planning, responsive services, systems support, and sample guidance lessons.

<http://www.missouricareereducation.org/for/content/guidance/>

### Missouri School Counselor Guide to Consultation and Collaboration

This document provides a guide to school consultation and collaboration.

<http://www.missouricareereducation.org/doc/consult/CollabConsult.pdf>

### School Psychology and Children's Mental Health

Here is a resource on how School Psychologists can support children's mental health.

<http://www.nasponline.org/advocacy/mhbrochure.aspx>

### Framework for Safe and Successful School Environments

See this joint statement from national organizations on school mental health supports and safe schools.

[http://www.nasponline.org/resources/handouts/Framework\\_for\\_Safe\\_and\\_Successful\\_School\\_Environments.pdf](http://www.nasponline.org/resources/handouts/Framework_for_Safe_and_Successful_School_Environments.pdf)

### Advancing Education Effectiveness: Interconnecting School Mental Health and School-Wide Positive Behavior Support

Read about the Interconnected Systems Framework, which connects school mental health and PBIS. This document provides resources on implementing a multi-tiered system and using data.

<http://www.pbis.org/common/cms/files/Current%20Topics/Final-Monograph.pdf>

### Role of School Social Workers

This document provides an overview of another mental health collaborator, School Social Workers.

<http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.sswaa.org/resource/resmgr/imported/Role%20of%20School%20Social%20Worker.pdf>

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