

Chapter 7

Training School Counselors to Serve as Antibullying Specialists

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores school counselors' role in accordance to the nation's indicated most extensive and comprehensive antibullying policy by the U.S. Department of Education (US DOE) as well as in alignment with the position of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). The author introduces and evaluates bullying implications for underserved populations and research concerning the experiences of school counselors when serving students in the additional role designated by the model policy, antibullying specialist. This chapter identifies research driven suggestions for most effective practices counselor educators can train school counselors to advocate for when designing and implementing their comprehensive school counseling programs with prevention and intervention components.

INTRODUCTION

Did you ever think that when you began your educational and professional journey to become a school counselor, you would also need to become a specialist regarding bullying concerns in schools? You may be thinking, *I know that as a school counselor, I will be responsible for a comprehensive school counseling program that embraces students' **character development** (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2016b) and **bullying/harassment prevention** (ASCA, 2016c); however, being a specialist entails much more. ASCA has developed a **Bullying prevention specialist training** in response to the impact on the school counselor role nationwide (2020). ASCA's (2019b) professional standards and competencies require school counselors to adhere to the legal responsibilities of the role of the school counselor (B.PF-3.b.). Therefore, understanding and exploring your state statutes for handling harassment, intimidation, and bullying in schools is a necessity. Research surrounding school counselor roles in addressing bullying in schools found that school counselors were the employees who received the reports (Swank et al., 2019). Currently, if you reside in the state of **New Jersey** (NJ), you will need to be prepared to fulfill the additional role of an antibullying specialist when employed as a school counselor. Furthermore,*

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school counselors have the responsibility to articulate and provide a rationale for appropriate activities for school counselors (ASAC, 2019b, B.PF-8.d.) as well as articulate and provide rationale for discontinuation of inappropriate activities for school counselors (B.PF-8.e.). As a result, knowing the roles of a school counselor also needs to be understood in the event your state moves to another approach. A recent national study exploring school counselors' roles and responsibilities in bullying prevention found school counselors perceived themselves as having less responsibility than what their school's principal believed them to have with both reporting and policy development (Swank et al., 2019). School counselors are ethically obligated to report all incidents of bullying to school administration (ASCA, 2016, A.11.a.). Understanding your state's policy, trends, and best-practices supported by research is imperative for school counselors when advocating for their role related to bullying in their schools.

Studies suggest counselors have an active role in implementing antibullying prevention with school stakeholders (e.g., teachers and parents) so students will feel comfortable sharing when bullying occurs (Elbedour et al., 2020). School counselors are ethically required to "Inform all stakeholders, including students, parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, community members and courts of justice of best ethical practices, values and expected behaviors of the school counseling professional" (ASCA, 2016, purpose, p. 1). However, only the state of **New Jersey's** antibullying policy truly defines the school counselor's role within the school community in addressing bullying. Therefore, for this chapter, **New Jersey's** response to bullying will be evaluated concerning the school counselor's role and implications for **counselor educators** in training school counselors. **New Jersey** has been specifically selected since the state's antibullying policy has been noted as the toughest legislation against bullying in the nation (America's Promise Alliance, 2014; Hu, 2011) and the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) asserted the policy serves as a model for other states to implement (Stuart-Cassel et al., 2011). In 2011, Stuart-Cassel, Bell, and Springer were contracted by the U.S. Department of Education to perform an analysis of state bullying laws and policies; as of 2020, this report remains the most current suggesting **New Jersey's** policy to be the model states should reflect. Since, the analysis, **New Jersey** had a few amendments to their policy, but none impacted the school counselor role as an **antibullying specialist**.

As of 2011, **New Jersey's** Antibullying Bill of Rights (NJ Rev Stat § 18A:37-15, 2013) indicated school counselors can be appointed in the additional role as the schools' **antibullying specialist**. As the **antibullying specialist**, school counselors are asked to judge students' character through investigation of reported cases of harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying (HIB). Currently, school counselor response to bullying in schools as the **antibullying specialist** is unique to the state of **New Jersey**; however, the U.S. Department of Education has found that the state of **New Jersey's** Antibullying Bill of Rights Act (ABR; 2010) has the greatest extent of coverage and expansiveness compared to the other 49 states and recommended other states to utilize **New Jersey** as a model when modifying their own. Since **New Jersey's** policy is noted to be a model for other states to implement, this additional responsibility of a school counselor may be imposed upon other states' school counselors in the future. Therefore, implications of school counselors' additional role as the **antibullying specialist** are vital for understanding current policies affecting the profession (ASCA, 2016a, B.3.b.). Noting federal preference of policy is essential for school counselors so they can effectively plan to fulfill their future role requirements as well as understand advocacy needed to ensure effective counseling services for students nationwide.

Bullying occurs among all races and cultures. However, research suggests that ethnic minorities in a school are more likely to be bullied (Swearer, 2011). Furthermore, studies found that students reported they were bullied because they were different from a normative group. Studies found that students who have a disability or deficits in social skills are more vulnerable to being bullied. School counselors are

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