

CHAPTER 133

AN ACT concerning school counselors and supplementing Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

C.18A:6-44.1 Findings, declarations.

1. The Legislature finds and declares that school counselors are vital to the effort to ensure that school districts, charter schools, and renaissance school projects are able to adequately address student needs and to implement appropriate programming.

C.18A:6-44.2 "School counselor" defined.

2. As used in sections 3 and 4 of this act, "school counselor" means an individual who holds and works under the authority of a New Jersey standard educational services certificate with a school counselor endorsement.

C.18A:6-44.3 Role of school counselor.

3. a. It shall be the role of a school counselor to:

(1) recognize and respond to the need for mental health services that promote social and emotional wellness and development for all students; and

(2) design and deliver a comprehensive program for school counseling that promotes the achievement of students.

b. Each school counselor employed by a school district, charter school, or renaissance school project shall provide appropriate school counseling services that shall include, but not be limited to:

(1) addressing needs relating to the academic, career, social, and emotional development of all students;

(2) individual student academic planning and goal setting;

(3) school counseling classroom lessons based on student success standards;

(4) short-term counseling of students;

(5) referrals for long-term services and supports;

(6) collaboration with families, teachers, administrators, and community members that fosters student success;

(7) attending, when appropriate, individualized education program (IEP) meetings and other student-focused meetings; and

(8) data analysis to identify student issues, needs, and challenges.

C.18A:6-44.4 Professional development requirements for school counselors.

4. The State Board of Education shall establish professional development requirements for school counselors. The State board shall require, as part of the professional development requirements, that each school counselor complete professional development training in areas related to the duties of a school counselor including, but not limited to, the promotion of mental health awareness; suicide prevention; crisis-intervention; trauma-informed counseling practices; cultural competency and responsiveness; the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports, which includes the systematic delivery of interventions and supports to students demonstrating academic, behavioral, mental health, emotional, and other needs; delivery of social and emotional learning programming; and college and career readiness.

C.18A:26-2.17a School counseling program, standard educational services certificate requirements.

5. In addition to any other requirements adopted by the State Board of Education for school counseling programs, the State board shall require that a school counseling program at an accredited college or university leading to a standard educational services certificate with a school counselor endorsement incorporate the following:

- a. the American School Counselor Association's national model for comprehensive school counseling programs or a State-approved model; and
- b. training in the delivery of social and emotional learning programming as well as postsecondary and career planning.

C.18A:4-35.3 State School Counselor Liaison, report to Governor, Legislature.

6. a. The Commissioner of Education shall appoint a State School Counselor Liaison. The State School Counselor Liaison shall hold a New Jersey standard educational services certificate with a director of school counseling services endorsement and have experience in the delivery of social and emotional learning programming as well as postsecondary and career advisement. The State School Counselor Liaison shall work with school districts, charter schools, renaissance school projects, and school counselors to facilitate best practices by advancing comprehensive school counseling services that address the mental and behavioral health and wellness of all students. The State School Counselor Liaison, in performing the duties of the position, shall collaborate with other State agencies and associated stakeholders.

b. It shall be the duty of the State School Counselor Liaison to:

(1) serve as a liaison and resource expert in school counseling and comprehensive school counseling services for New Jersey certificated school counselors and the Department of Education;

(2) foster and promote professional development for school counselors, which may include planning, coordinating, or providing educational guidance, and networking with universities, the New Jersey School Counselor Association, and other providers of continuing education to meet identified needs;

(3) monitor, interpret, synthesize, and disseminate relevant information associated with changes in school counseling practices, legislation, and legal issues that impact school counselors; and

(4) initiate, participate in, and utilize research studies related to school counseling practices, the mental health needs of children and youth, and related issues.

c. The State School Counselor Liaison shall report annually to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), the Legislature. The report shall include a summary of the activities of the State School Counselor Liaison during the year and any specific recommendations deemed appropriate and necessary concerning school counseling services and comprehensive school mental health services.

d. As used in this section, "school counselor" means an individual who holds and works under the authority of a New Jersey standard educational services certificate with a school counselor endorsement.

7. The State Board of Education shall adopt, in accordance with the "Administrative Procedures Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), rules and regulations as may be necessary to implement the provisions of this act.

8. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved August 21, 2025.