

EDPY 442: INTRODUCTION TO COUNSELLING

School Counselling
Guest Lecture: Dr. Carley Christianson

Overview of School Counselling

- School counsellors are unique to their practice as they provide a wide array of services
- School counsellors help students with developmental tasks, so students can have the opportunity to reach their educational goals, choose a vocational path and develop as functioning members of society
- School counsellors work with students, parents, teachers, and administrators

History of School Counselling in Canada

- 1920s: School counselling was guidance counselling and was provided by teachers in the classroom
- 1960s: Emphasis changed and counsellors began to play a remedial role in the school system by focusing their attention on treating students who had serious psychological or behavioral problems
- 1970s: The focus on remediation diminished when schools began to encourage counsellors to take a preventative and developmental approach toward counselling
- 1990s: School counsellors continued to emphasize a developmental and preventative approach to counselling, but also began to promote the use of cross cultural and family counselling strategies

Issues Faced by School Counsellors

- ☐ At times, school counsellors may find that their role in the school system is misunderstood, misperceived, or understated by teachers, which can result in animosity between teachers and counsellors
- ☐ Students may also be uncertain about the role of the counsellor or have a negative bias or stigma associated with the counsellor's role
- ☐ School counsellors should educate teachers and students about all of their activities and roles as well as dealing with perceptions and assumptions about mental health support and counselling

Activities of School Counsellors

- ☐ Work with students, teachers, parents, administrators and community members
- ☐ Involved in the life of the school and the students and much of their work occurs as a natural response to the community, the political climate, school staff attitudes and the nature of living in the particular school environment
- ☐ Are often responsible for developing and implementing interventions that are beneficial to both the school and the community
- ☐ Promote and facilitate the emotional, physical, and social well being of students, parents, teachers and administrators

How is this done?...Using the 4 C's

Coordination

-Services, case management (team-based meetings), and transition through the system.

Consultation

-With parents, teachers, administrators etc.
-Community resources
-Classroom/school-based activities

Counselling

-Educational-goals, work habits, learning style
-Personal/social-usually short-term
-Vocational-goals, educational decision making etc.

Curriculum Development (elementary)

Strategies Utilized by School Counsellors

- ☐ Preventative programs (systemic or individual)
- ☐ Intervention programs
- ☐ Peer support/counselling
- ☐ Individual/group therapy
- ☐ Awareness programs
- ☐ Crisis support and intervention
- ☐ Educational and curriculum programs
- ☐ Culture-specific programs and support

Elementary School Counselling

Age-specific responsibilities:

- ☐ Identify and intervene with children who have learning difficulties, social-emotional or behavioral difficulties and/or developmental delays, those who may require special services, and those that have family concerns
- ☐ Working closely with parents/guardians
- ☐ Accessing community supports and out-reach
- ☐ Teaching social skills and adaptive behavior
- ☐ General focus is on prevention of onset or remediation of identified issues
- ☐ Use of play therapy, bibliotherapy, and games

Middle/Junior High School Counselling

Age-specific responsibilities:

- ☐ Developmental focus-issues related to maturation, gender-identity, sexual orientation, peer relations, self-concept, social and moral choice-making, autonomy, and independence etc
- ☐ Increased academic demands of junior high school and preparation for high school
- ☐ Identification, prevention and remediation of academic/learning, social, emotional, and behavioral concerns
- ☐ Support with family relations and conflict
- ☐ Accessing community resources and support

High school Counselling

Age-specific responsibilities:

- ☐ Continues to have a developmental focus- issues related to early adulthood, romantic relationships, gender-identity, sexual orientation, peer relations, self-concept, social and moral choice-making, autonomy and independence.
- ☐ Vocational counselling and career decision making
- ☐ Post-secondary preparation (emotional, financial, academic etc.)
- ☐ Increased academic demands of high school and preparation of testing and government exams
- ☐ Accessing community resources and support

Common Concerns- Suicide

- ☐ In 1997, suicide was the second leading cause of death among Canadian youths aged 15-24 years (Statistics Canada). This statistic only reflects the number of reported suicides, not suspected or attempted.
- ☐ Some research has indicated that suicide attempts occur at a rate of 20 to 100 times more frequently than completed suicides
- ☐ Suicide attempts are three times more common among females, but four to five times more likely to be successful among males. Men tend to use more absolute means such as guns, while women tend to use methods such as drug overdoses that may allow time for intervention

Common Concerns- Substance Abuse

- ☐ Substance abuse prevention is recommended at an early age. According to Statistics Canada (2004), 42% of youths between the ages of 12-15 years have consumed at least one alcoholic drink, 22% of those have been drunk at least once, and 19% have smoked marijuana
- ☐ Drinking behavior in high school has been correlated with drinking behavior in university and college
- ☐ Statistics Canada (2003) has also determined that almost 8% of youths aged 15-24 years have a substance dependency issue

Common Concerns- Sexual Abuse

- ☐ Affects 19-28% of women and 9-16% of men
- ☐ Sexual abuse prevention programs should teach children about what constitutes sexual abuse, how and whom they can disclose the abuse, the importance of disclosure, and the likely effects and implications of disclosure
- ☐ Counsellors can education parents about how to talk to their children about sexual abuse

Common Concerns- Depression

- ☐ Counsellors can play a vital role in diagnosing and treating depression
- ☐ Reports suggest rates as high as 20% in children
- ☐ As a result of the demanding social and academic school environment, many of the symptoms of childhood depression are revealed at school. Consequently, school personnel such as counsellors and teachers are in a better position to identify childhood depression than parents
- ☐ Depression may manifest similarly to attention issues, anxiety, learning difficulties, and anger or conduct problems
- ☐ Treatment can include individual counselling or referral to another professional

Common Concerns- Sexual Orientation

- ☐ During adolescence youth may have to deal with emerging sexual feelings that may make them feel frightened, confused or ashamed, and adjust to a socially stigmatized role
- ☐ Gay and lesbian youth are more likely to be rejected by their parents, run away from home, become victims of violence and sexual abuse, engage in unhealthy sexual behaviors, and become involved in prostitution
- ☐ School counsellors can actively combat homophobia and heterosexism in the school to create a safe, accepting school environment

Common Concerns- Cultural Diversity

- 17% of Canadian youth are immigrants
- Many children are often segregated from their peers at school and placed in ESL resource rooms, which can cause them to feel lonely, incompetent, and as if they do not belong in their new school and culture
- Language can also inhibit parents from intervening of being included in the students' adjustment

Conclusion

- School counsellors are responsible for fostering the well-being of children ranging from ages 5-18 years. Since children are constantly changing, school counsellors must be aware of a broad range of issues that children are likely to encounter as they develop
- School counsellors have an especially challenging and important role
- Canadian school counsellors are actively involved in developing and implementing programs addressing issues such as suicide, sexual abuse, substance abuse, poor peer relationships, youth violence, depression, and homosexuality. Without the assistance of the school counsellors, many Canadian children may not receive the guidance they need to develop into healthy, full-functioning adults.
