

## Chapter 2 What Do Counselors Do?

### Chapter Overview

This chapter highlights the many different roles that counselors might assume, highlighting 20 common roles and functions of counselors. Readers are encouraged to interact with the reading by making note of the roles that are most and least appealing to them as they consider their future in the profession. Four stories by practicing counselors in different settings are used to highlight how counselors choose to engage in these activities, including a pie chart with the percentage of time these professionals spend in each of their roles. The *Counseling Controversy* in this chapter highlights a particularly controversial role, that of counselor as diagnostician, and provides arguments for and against this activity. In the *Informed by Research* feature, readers learn how research can be used to advocate for the appropriate use of a counselor's time.

### Learner Objectives

#### The learner will:

1. be exposed to many different roles that counselors might assume
2. understand the variety of roles within the counseling profession and begin to see counseling as a diverse profession
3. be able to describe the basic components of each of the 20 roles listed
4. understand why some roles and functions are inappropriate for counselors
5. be able to describe the pros and cons of counselors as diagnosticians from the Counseling Controversy
6. use the *Informed by Research* feature to understand how school counselors can use research to advocate for their profession
7. determine which roles are most appealing as s/he considers her/his future identity as a professional counselor

### Special Interactive Features Embedded in this Chapter

There are many special features included in this chapter that can be used to encourage learners to begin to form an understanding of the counseling profession and their future role as a professional counselor.

The following features specifically include an interactive feature that can be used for classroom discussion, small group activities, or journaling.

**Table 2.1:** The Many Roles of the Counselor

#### Purpose

To help students begin to see the diversity of the profession and to start the conversation about their ideal job as a professional counselor.

#### Interactive Activity

In this table, students are introduced to 20 different roles that counselors might assume. Before reading the full discussion of each of the roles, students are asked to make a notation to indicate (A) roles that they are very interested in; (B) roles that they are uncertain about; (C) roles that they do not think would be a good fit for them; (!) roles that surprise or intrigue them; and (?) roles that they do not know enough about to form an opinion.

### **Suggested Activities or Classroom Discussion Questions**

1. Have students complete these tasks before reading the chapter. Once they have completed the reading (or classroom discussion), have them return to the table and make any changes to their responses. What did they learn that caused them to change their opinions?
2. The four counselors with Snapshots in this chapter have a pie chart of their “typical day” divided into the different roles they assume. Have students develop a pie chart that includes the percentage of time in each of the different roles for their “ideal job” as a counselor. Once the pie chart is completed, encourage discussion or exploration about what setting or specialty might accommodate their interests. (Note: it may be useful to return to this same pie chart later in the academic term to see if any of their ideas have changed as they learned more about the profession.)
3. Divide the roles among students in the class and have them learn more about their assigned role and report back to the class with more information. Students might interview counselors or members of the community, read information on the Internet, or attend workshops or trainings to learn more about particular roles.

**Counseling Controversy:** Should mental health counselors engage in diagnosis of mental and emotional disorders?

#### **Purpose**

To introduce students to a current discussion in the field that has strong advocates on both sides. Counseling Controversies are designed to help students recognize that this is not a static profession that they must memorize “correct” answers about. Rather, the counseling profession is full of excitement and energy and a diversity of opinions and ideas.

#### **Interactive Activity**

In this controversy, students are exposed to the idea of diagnosis of mental and emotional disorders, the DSM, and the current controversy surrounding this topic. They are asked to place an “X” on the continuum between the two sides at the place that best represents their current thinking about the controversy and to make some quick notes about their reasoning.

### **Suggested Activities or Classroom Discussion Questions**

1. Encourage students to mark in their books where they stand on this continuum and their reasoning.
2. Use a debate style in class, and have students take sides of this argument. Consider bringing in outside resources or information to enhance the discussion.
3. Encourage students to take a broader view of this issue. Instead of the implied dualism of the debate (e.g., either this side or that side is “correct”), what if both sides are right? Where would the middle ground be? What if neither of these arguments is correct? The Counseling Controversy provides a “teachable moment” about the complexities of the profession and the many diverse opinions and ideas held by counseling professionals.
4. Have students look up their state in Table 2.2 to see if licensed mental health counselors in their states have diagnosis within their scope of practice. What does it mean for future counselors to be licensed in a state that does (or does not) include diagnosis?
5. Designate two ends of the classroom as the two points on the continuum of this debate, and have students place themselves where they think they stand on this issue. Allow students at different points in the continuum to articulate why they chose to stand in that spot.
6. Revisit this controversy later in the term (this underscores the importance of having students make a mark in their books at this point in the term so they remember where they started). Has anything changed now that they have more information about the profession?

**Spotlight:** The Many Faces of Advocacy

#### **Purpose**

To help students recognize that advocacy is part of the profession of counseling, in big ways and small, and to encourage them to think about their own role and responsibility as an advocate for others and for the profession.

### **Interactive Activity**

In this Spotlight, students are exposed to 12 different stories of advocacy by counseling students and professionals. Some of the stories represent large-scale, lifelong efforts while others are simpler stories of small choices that counselors made that can have a big impact on the lives the others. Students are asked to think about what their own contribution to advocacy might be.

### **Suggested Activities or Classroom Discussion Questions**

1. What does it mean to be an advocate? Why is it considered a “professional imperative” for counselors?
2. If available in your campus or community, bring in a guest speaker from NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) or Mental Health America or other groups that advocates for mental health support.
3. As students construct their own stories of advocacy, help them develop both long-term goals and shorter-term projects or ideas that they can complete while in graduate school.

### **Key Terms and Concepts**

Academic Advising  
Accountability Logs  
Agent of Social Change  
ASCA National Model  
Case Manager  
Consultant  
Continuing Education Units (CEUs)  
Counseling Supervision  
Counselor Educator  
Court-ordered (Mandated) Clients  
Crisis Counseling  
Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders  
Direct Service Provider  
Disaster Mental Health Responders  
Expert Witness  
Formal Assessment  
Healthy Internal Supervisor  
Indirect Services  
Informal Assessment  
K-12 Guidance Curriculum  
Legislative Day  
Lifelong Learner  
Mediation  
*Murphy v. A. A. Mathews*  
Practitioner-Scientist  
Preventative Groups  
Pschoeducational Groups  
Remedial/Therapeutic Groups  
*Sain v. Cedar Rapids Community School District*  
Secondary Trauma

## TEST QUESTIONS

### Multiple Choice Questions

1. The preferred term (as recognized by ASCA, the professional association for this type of counselor) for counselors who work in school settings is: \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Professional School Counselor
  - b. Guidance Counselor
  - c. School-Based Counselor
  - d. School Mental Health Specialist
2. The three broad areas of focus for school counselors, according to the ASCA national standards, include all of the following except: \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Academic Development
  - b. Career Development
  - c. Personal/Social Development
  - d. Moral Development
3. Which of the following is an example of a counselor in the role of consultant: \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. A school counselor meets with children who are fighting in the lunchroom
  - b. A clinical counselor runs a group for people who have lost a child
  - c. A rehabilitation counselor helps school administrators select appropriate assistive technology for a student with a disability
  - d. A career counselor encourages a client to interview people about their jobs
4. Ongoing learning for professional counselors that takes place after graduate education has been completed is part the code of ethics of the profession as well as state licensure and certification laws. The term for this type of learning is: \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Continuing Education Units (CEUs)
  - b. Professional Development Programs (PDPs)
  - c. Life-Long Learning Units (LLs)
  - d. Counselor Education Plans (CEPs)
5. Sometimes counselors are in the role of teacher or educator as they help their clients or students engage in New Learning. Which of these is the most appropriate example of the type of teaching or educating that can take place in a counseling session: \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Giving clients advice on what to do
  - b. Telling clients the best way to overcome their problems
  - c. Exposing clients to the different strategies to set goals
  - d. Sharing with clients how the counselor has overcome his/her own problems
6. Supervision of beginning counselors is intended to do which of the following: \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Provide opportunities for more senior members of the profession to guide and mentor new professionals
  - b. Monitor the quality of the counseling services provided by the supervisee
  - c. Serve as a gatekeeper to the profession
  - d. All of the above
7. Crisis counseling is: \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Typically short term in nature
  - b. Legally offered only by those with a crisis counseling certification
  - c. Based on a skill set that is entirely different than typical counseling
  - d. Useful for helping clients uncover the underlying reasons for their problems

8. When counselors are hired by prosecutors or defendants to provide input on legal cases, they are operating in the role of: \_\_\_\_\_
- Legal Aide
  - Expert Witness
  - Court Ordered Counselor
  - Legal Counselor
9. Counselor as Prevention Specialist helps clients: \_\_\_\_\_
- Build resilience
  - Encourage healthy development through the lifespan
  - Take a proactive, rather than reactive, approach to their wellness
  - All of the above
10. The examples of advocacy in the chapter have which of the following element in common: \_\_\_\_\_
- They use a national platform to get their message across
  - They have advanced degrees and specialized training in advocacy
  - They have a personal commitment to enhancing the lives of others
  - All of the above
11. The 20 roles of the counselor listed in the chapter include all of the following except: \_\_\_\_\_
- Counselor as businessperson
  - Counselor as researcher or scientist
  - Counselor as advisor
  - Counselor as disciplinarian
12. Which of the following has been identified by the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) as an inappropriate role for school counselors: \_\_\_\_\_
- Teaching classes when teachers are absent
  - Counseling students with excessive tardiness or absenteeism
  - Ensuring student records are maintained in accordance with state and federal regulations
  - Providing teachers with suggestions for better study hall management
13. In the Snapshot by Susie Boggs, Licensed Professional School Counselor, she stated that she, like most high school counselors, spends the majority of her time in: \_\_\_\_\_
- Individual counseling and crisis management
  - Program planning
  - Classroom guidance activities
  - Supervising new counselors and interns
14. It has been argued that counselors are particularly well suited to the role of prevention specialist because: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prevention activities are the most popular type of counseling
  - Prevention is a defining characteristic of the counseling profession that helps distinguish counselors from other helping professionals
  - Prevention is the only type of counseling that is legally permitted by the counseling licensure laws of most states
  - Prevention activities are well reimbursed by insurance companies and businesses
15. When counselors write grant proposals to seek funding to support their programs, they should do all of the following except: \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify specific programmatic objectives that the funds will be used to support
  - Specify how programmatic objectives will be met
  - Develop a budget that does not include a salary or fee for the counselor, since that would be a conflict of interest
  - Target grant opportunities that align with the mission and goals of their program

16. The advocacy competencies required of school counselors include: \_\_\_\_\_
- Having the disposition (personality, temperament) to advocate on behalf of students
  - Possessing the knowledge of resources necessary to advocate for students
  - Using communication and collaboration skills to become advocate
  - All of the above
17. When counselors are negatively affected by the difficult stories that they hear from clients or the effects of violence or destruction that they see, that is an example of: \_\_\_\_\_
- Secondary trauma
  - Counselor impairment
  - Advanced empathy
  - Secure boundaries
18. Practitioner-scientist is the term used to describe counselors who: \_\_\_\_\_
- Engage in large-scale research studies
  - Believe that research is the most important activity for counselors
  - Use existing research to inform their practice
  - All of the above
19. When counselors work with other professionals to help them improve the service they provide, that is an example of counselor as: \_\_\_\_\_
- Mediator
  - Therapist
  - Consultant
  - Administrator
20. Counselors in the role of group leader typically operate in which of the following settings: \_\_\_\_\_
- Schools
  - Mental health agencies
  - Rehabilitation centers
  - All of the above

## TRUE/FALSE

1. The term “counseling” is a protected term in most states, meaning that only licensed counselors can use that word.
- \_\_\_\_\_ True \_\_\_\_\_ False
2. Researchers found that when school counselors engaged in interventions that focus on the development of cognitive, social, and self-management skills, students’ standardized test scores improved.
- \_\_\_\_\_ True \_\_\_\_\_ False
3. Licensed counselors can diagnose mental and emotional disorders in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.
- \_\_\_\_\_ True \_\_\_\_\_ False
4. According to legal precedent, school counselors can be held accountable for providing accurate information to high school students about credits and courses needed to pursue post-high school endeavors.
- \_\_\_\_\_ True \_\_\_\_\_ False

5. When counselors act as mediators, they provide expert testimony to courts what is the best resolution to a conflict.
- \_\_\_\_ True \_\_\_\_ False
6. Even though counselor as Member of Professional Associations is included as a counseling role, the reality is that fewer than half of all counselors are members of any professional association.
- \_\_\_\_ True \_\_\_\_ False

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. The ASCA national standards recommend that high school counselors spend 15-25% of their time implementing the guidance curriculum. This is less time than is recommended for elementary school counselors, who should spend 30-40% of their time implementing the guidance curriculum. Why is the percentage of time spent in these activities lower for high school counselors? How does the developmental needs of the students factor into the amount of time spent in guidance activities?
2. Why is proper assessment critical to the role of counselors in all settings?
3. In the Informed by Research section of the chapter, you learned that school principals identified several tasks that they thought were appropriate for school counselors, including (a) registration and scheduling of new students; (b) administering achievement tests; and (c) maintaining school records. List reasons why these tasks are inappropriate for school counselors.
4. Why do counselors, in particular, have a “professional imperative” to be advocates who fight against individual or societal injustices?
5. Compare and contrast the arguments of those who believe counselors should be legally allowed to diagnose mental and emotional disorders with those who believe that this is an inappropriate role for counselors.

