

Date: April 29, 2010

To: Panel to Hear Public Comments on Proposed Changes for Certification of School Counselors

From: Patricia A. Landers

Re: Proposed New Certification Regulations for CT School Counselors as outlined under Part XV, Special Services – Section 10-145d-922, Provision of services to students with disabilities

My name is Patricia Landers and I am an Adjunct Instructor in the Counseling & Family Therapy Department at Central Connecticut State University. My area of expertise is School Counseling. I have held this position since 1995. Prior to this appointment, I was the Director of School Counseling, grades 6-12, for the Newington School System for 33 years. I have also worked out of state in a regional school district located in a college town with students from 5 rural communities feeding into the high school. My concerns about the proposed new certification regulations for school counselors are twofold:

Concern 1:

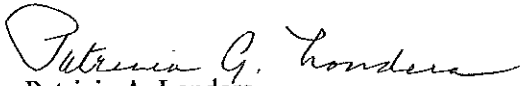
The grouping together of school counselors, school psychologists, social workers, speech pathologists and marriage & family therapists under special services.

- Unlike other specialties in the school system, school counselors work with all students in the school. They are assigned a caseload of students and are expected to work with them, their parents, teachers, and administrators to facilitate student potential for growth in the three broad areas of academic, career, and personal/social development. All students, regular and special education, being assigned to a school counselor is unique to the profession as is its focus on these three broad areas of student growth and development that form the core of content for the Connecticut Comprehensive School Counseling Program, K-12.
- These developmental goals, the program content, are delivered through the school counseling curriculum lessons and activities in classroom and group settings, annual individual student planning which results in a portfolio outlining career and educational pathways, individual and group counseling that address student problems that prevent student success in the three developmental areas, and collaborative and advocacy efforts within the school and community. Some of the needs addressed through the program focus on a range of issues from coping skills, peer relationship, cultural diversity, anger management, grief, harassment, bullying, and conflict resolution, suicidal ideation, self-injury, family issues, decision making, goal setting, and career, education, and college planning.
- The ultimate goals of school counseling are to provide strategies that enhance academic progress and achievement of all students, and to provide assistance and direction to students in establishing academic, career and personal goals, as well as developing future career and education plans. In fact, results of a recent two-year research project conducted collaboratively among the Connecticut School Counseling Association, The Connecticut State Department of Education, and the Center for School Counseling Outcome Research at the University of Massachusetts found that more intensive college and career counseling services provided for high school students were associated with significant reductions in suspensions rates and in the total number of disciplinary incidents in Connecticut high schools for the 2008-2009 school year.

Concern 2:

The new regulations focus on an in depth knowledge of special education, diagnostic and functional behavioral assessments, consultation on modifications and accommodations of instruction, developing behavior intervention plans, facilitating the planning and placement team process, and coordinating case management and the individualized education programs and services for students with disabilities.

- School counselors historically have had regular and special education students as part of their caseload and worked collaboratively with special education case managers on behalf of the students and their parents. School counselors collaborate on determining interventions for special education students through the planning and placement team process but they do not assess, design, and implement the interventions.
- Regulations that require school counselors to function as special education specialists will define school counseling as a one dimensional profession focusing primarily on the needs of special education students and placing school counselors in a position of spending 90% of their time with 10% of the school population. This will mean the virtual elimination of comprehensive school counseling programs in Connecticut that are designed to address the needs of all students.


Patricia A. Landers