

APPENDIX J

ESTABLISHING AN ADVISORY COUNCIL

Advisory Council Member Selection

The first step in forming a viable council is selecting quality candidates for membership. The council must be able to function as a communications link between the school counseling program and the various groups to be served: students, parents/guardians, educators, businesses and the community. Careful selection of members is critical – screening candidates is a good idea. Members may be selected to represent:

- Both genders, individuals of all abilities, and racial and ethnic minorities.
- Appropriate representatives of businesses and the community whose expertise will benefit the program. Individuals who can represent various organizations important to school counseling and the counseling area should also be considered.
- Individuals from various ages, educational levels and parents/guardians will offer valuable contributions.

Members should also be screened for their personal qualities. Some qualities desirable in Advisory Council members include:

- A sincere interest in the school counseling program. Doing an adequate job will require that each member be willing to take an active role in the council, not a passive one.
- Background knowledge of school counseling. Individuals with occupational expertise and/or work experience in counseling are valuable assets. Individuals with no foundation knowledge to offer when they are first appointed may find the information and understanding gap is too great to overcome.
- Good communication skills, administrative skills, and a willingness to work hard. These are characteristics of an effective leader and should be a prerequisite for membership on the council.
- A member with good character and the confidence and respect of their associates in the business community. The good reputation of the council's members will enhance the standing and reputation of the entire program.
- Respect and tolerance are critical qualities, as well as the ability to be a good listener and to express his/her opinions.
- Willingness to devote the time required to be an Advisory Council member. A commitment to attend council meetings and to work on projects is a prerequisite.

Advisory Council Establishment

1. Commitment to the Advisory Council must be made by the school administration and teachers. Without a willingness to consider the Advisory Committee's advice, the Council will not function properly as a vehicle for education input nor will it attract the kind of members needed for an effective group.
2. Goals and Objectives for the Advisory Council should be set in advance of selecting members. It is the responsibility of the educational institution and the counselor involved to let the Council know the direction that it should take. These goals can be subject to revision as the need might arise.
3. The effectiveness of the Advisory Council rests on focused activities. It is crucial that each Advisory Council meeting have a specific agenda and goals to be accomplished. Minutes of previous meetings and an agenda of the upcoming meeting should also be sent to each member several days in advance.
4. The number of Advisory Committee members should be according to local district needs. The number of people participating on the Advisory Committee can vary. The greater the representation, the more realistic and up-to-date information can be. With expanding numbers, however, there is a greater risk of having a group that is less manageable. This group should not be so large that it becomes cumbersome to deal with and should lend itself to informal, constructive discussion. Generally, a good rule of thumb is to establish a committee with a minimum of eight members and a maximum of twenty members.

5. **Invitation.** Potential members should be invited officially by letter to serve on the Advisory Council. A brief explanation should be provided in the letter to indicate the amount of time that may be needed and some of the purposes of the old Advisory Council. An opportunity for the potential member to decline should also be included.
6. **The first meeting.** An Advisory Council should be called together by the person in charge of the committee. Information should be provided in detail as to the purpose and direction of the committee. Along with this information, any reports and other information and data that has been previously collected should be included in a packet to each member. Setting meeting dates and times and other organizational activities should take place at the first meeting.
7. **Advisory Council Coordination.** It is the responsibility of the educator in charge of the Advisory Council to help set up meetings, develop the agenda, contact the Advisory Council members, and provide general assistance to the committee.
8. **Term of Membership.** Members should be appointed to definite terms of office serving from one to three years. Provision should be made for staggered replacement so that there will always be experienced members serving. When a term has expired, a new committee member should be appointed for a new term.
9. **Number of Meetings.** Needless meetings should not be called. It is important however, to maintain an open line of communication with all Advisory Council members. Meetings should be called as needed with a minimum of two per year needed to update the committee on any changes to the program. Periodic telephone contacts between formal Advisory Council meetings are also recommended.

Advisory Council Activities

The Advisory Council can be an effective tool to help build an excellent school counseling and counseling program. Like any tool, it must be adequately maintained and used properly. These tasks are largely the responsibility of the School Counseling Program Director.

Advisory councils provide the kind of expertise and assistance to the counselor that can only come from perspectives outside the school counseling program. Advisory councils assist greatly in deciding what is to be taught. The counselor must always retain the responsibility for determining how the content will be taught.

Specifically, some of the most important activities advisory councils are called upon to perform are as follows:

- Validating program content in terms of community needs, work standards, and program goals.
- Offering advice on new directions the program may take by reviewing the curriculum, objectives and other features of the program.
- Recommend policies and offer school counseling as new programs and activities evolve.
- Assist in activating community understanding and support. This often includes helping to secure donations of equipment, financial support, and instructional materials and resources.
- Offering general support by assisting with student activities, all public relations efforts, and providing continuity in times of change.