

Who are South Dakota School Counselors?

School counselors work at all levels of the K-12 school system. They are trained to help students succeed in school and plan their career. Through the implementation of a data-informed school counseling program, they can impact the academic achievement, career development, and social-emotional development of all students.



School Counselor Qualifications

- Acquire state certification as a School counselor Education Specialist by earning a master's degree in school counseling OR a master's degree or higher in counseling with one year of supervision by a mentor school counselor and passing the state-designated school counselor test ([ARSD 24:28:27.02](#))
- Fulfill continuing education requirements through professional development
- Uphold professional ethics



School Counselor Areas of Employment in South Dakota

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

MIDDLE SCHOOL

HIGH SCHOOL

DISTRICT LEVEL

School counselors are also employed in district supervisory positions. Beyond the K-12 school system, they are employed at the college/university level as educators for school counselor preparation programs.



Ideal Caseload: 250 students per school counselor

This ideal caseload helps school counselors meet the goal of spending 80% of their time working on behalf of their students, both directly and indirectly. Although student-to-school-counselor ratios vary by district, in school year 2020-21, the average ratio statewide was 363 to 1.

How do school counselors support students?

South Dakota school counselors play an essential role in the overall school system and as part of the leadership team by creating a culture of success for all students.

Manage and implement a comprehensive school counseling program that utilizes data-informed interventions to ensure all students receive the supports they need to succeed.



Work with students directly through:

- Instruction in classrooms and large and small groups
- Appraisal and advisement to help students understand themselves and plan goals
- Short-term small group and individual counseling
- Referrals to additional services for long-term support



Help all students:

- Apply academic achievement strategies
- Manage emotions and practice positive interpersonal skills
- Master learning strategies for success in academics, career, and life
- Explore career interests
- Plan for postsecondary options, such as higher education, military, and the workforce



Work on behalf of students through:

- Consultation and collaboration with families, teachers, administrators, and the community
- Advocacy at student-focused meetings, such as individual education plan (IEP) and 504 plan meetings
- Data analysis to identify student needs



For more information, visit the [SD Department of Education School Counseling webpage](#) or the [School-Based Mental Health Providers in South Dakota online document](#).

Adapted from: American School Counselor Association. (n.d.). Who are school counselors? Retrieved from: <https://schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/School-Counselor-Roles-Ratios>. References: American School Counselor Association. (n.d.). Student-to-school-counselor ratio 2020-2021. Retrieved from: <https://schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/238f136e-ec52-4bf2-94b6-f24c39447022/Ratios-20-21-Alpha.pdf>. National Association of Social Workers, South Dakota Chapter, School Social Work Association of America, South Dakota Association of School Psychologists, South Dakota Department of Education, South Dakota Division of Behavioral Health, South Dakota Mental Health Counseling Association, & South Dakota School Counselor Association. (2021). School-based mental health providers in South Dakota. Retrieved from: <https://doe.sd.gov/mentalhealth/>.