



A Strategic Guide for District and Building Leaders

Leveraging the Comprehensive School Counseling Program

VERSION 1.0



OREGON
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION



Table of Contents

A Strategic Guide for District and Building Leaders	2
The Updated Comprehensive School Counseling Program	2
10 Key Benefits to Administrators and Their Impact	3
How a CSCP Advances Your Mission and Improvement Goals	4
How Counseling Staff Operate Within the Program	5
Your Role in Making It Work	6
Summary	7





A Strategic Guide for District and Building Leaders

Few investments touch as many of a district's priorities at once as a Comprehensive School Counseling Program (CSCP), yet few are as consistently underused. When positioned well, a CSCP is a direct lever on the outcomes district and building leaders are accountable for: achievement, attendance, graduation, climate, equity, and postsecondary readiness. Positioned as a peripheral support, the program becomes a cost to absorb rather than a strategy to deploy. This resource guide is about getting that positioning right.

In Oregon, CSCPs are no longer a collection of ancillary “guidance” services provided by “guidance counselors” that operate on the margins of the school. These programs are a structured, data-driven, preventive program built on the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model and refined specifically to Oregon’s policies and contexts. These programs are designed, delivered, and evaluated with the same intentionality as your academic curriculum. When adequately funded, staffed, and protected, the program does not merely support your improvement goals; it actively advances them.

The following lays out the return on that investment, how the program advances your district and building improvement goals, and how counseling staff operate within it to serve students, families/caregivers, schools, and communities.

The Updated Comprehensive School Counseling Program

If your only frame of reference has been a counseling office that reacts to crises and absorbs administrative overflow, then your updated CSCP will look different in four important ways:

- **Comprehensive scope** serving *every* student, not only those in crisis, by addressing academic, career, and social/emotional development.
- **Preventive** design with an emphasis on proactive instruction and early intervention over reactive responses.
- **Developmental** nature with services sequenced and age-appropriate across grade levels.
- **Data-driven and accountable** where goals are established from school data and outcomes are measured and reported.

Oregon’s Framework for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs supports districts and schools with developing, implementing, assessing, and improving programs that are organized around the four



standardized components of *Define, Deliver, Manage, and Assess*. These components create a common language and provide a clear structure for program evaluation.

10 Key Benefits to Administrators and Their Impact

Each benefit below is paired with the outcome it moves, so you can connect the program directly to the measures on your report card and in your improvement plan.

1. Direct alignment with your mission and improvement goals

A CSCP is built from your district mission downward, and its goals are drawn from the same data that drives your School Improvement Plan: achievement, attendance, graduation, climate, equity, and postsecondary readiness.

Impact: *The program advances the outcomes you already report on rather than competing for time and attention as a separate initiative.*

2. Improved academic achievement

Well-implemented programs are consistently linked to gains in achievement, GPA, and course completion, particularly for students who have historically been underserved.

Impact: *Movement on the achievement and growth measures that anchor your building goals and state accountability measures.*

3. Better attendance and reduced chronic absenteeism

Counseling staff identify attendance barriers early, coordinate interventions, and connect students and families/caregivers to resources.

Impact: *Direct traction on regular attenders, a key Oregon accountability indicator, and the outcomes and funding tied to it.*

4. Improved behavior and school climate

Proactive instruction in social/emotional and behavioral skills, paired with responsive services, reduces incidents before they escalate.

Impact: *Fewer disciplinary referrals, reduced exclusionary practices, and a measurable lift in climate and connectedness survey results.*

5. A concrete equity lever

Because a CSCP serves each and every student by design, it systematically addresses which students are, and are not, accessing rigorous coursework, college pathways, and supports.

Impact: *A defensible, data-backed mechanism for closing the opportunity and disproportionality gaps your equity goals are committed to.*

6. Stronger college and career readiness

The program drives individual planning, advisement, FAFSA/ORSA completion, and postsecondary transition work for every student.

Impact: *Higher rates of on-time graduation and postsecondary enrollment, both central to Oregon's graduation and college and career readiness priorities.*

7. Mental health and crisis-response infrastructure

A staffed, coordinated program provides tiered mental health support and an organized crisis-response capacity and referral system.

Impact: *A coordinated safety net of trained professionals who support students in crisis and reduce the reactive load carried by building leaders.*

8. Efficient, accountable use of personnel

A defined program keeps school counselors and counseling staff in student-facing services rather than testing coordination, master-schedule building, and discipline coverage.

Impact: *Maximum return on a significant personnel investment, where you actually get counseling services and supports from your professionally trained counseling staff.*

9. Integration with MTSS/PBIS/RTI

A CSCP maps cleanly onto your multi-tiered system of supports, providing academic skill-building, social/emotional and behavioral supports, and college and career readiness across all three tiers.

Impact: *One coordinated system of supports that aligns staff and time around shared goals and efforts.*

10. Data and accountability for reporting

The program produces participation, CSC content standards, and student outcome data as routine practice.

Impact: *Progress evidence aligned to your Longitudinal Performance Growth Targets and disaggregated by focal student groups, ready for Integrated Plan reporting, school board and community review, and annual program evaluation tied to continuous improvement efforts.*

How a CSCP Advances Your Mission and Improvement Goals

The value of a CSCP to leadership lies in its alignment, not necessarily its activity. A strong program operationalizes your mission in five concrete ways:

It translates the mission into measurable program goals. Instead of vague aspirations, a CSCP sets goals such as *"increase FAFSA/ORSAA completion rate among first-generation seniors from 48% to 65%".* These goals are drawn from and reported against the same data as your SIP.

It uses data to target resources. Counseling staff analyze achievement, attendance, and discipline data to identify gaps and design Tier 1, 2, and 3 interventions where they will matter most. This makes the program responsive to *your* building and student's specific needs.

It provides the social/emotional, behavioral engine for MTSS. Where academics anchor Tier 1 core instruction, the CSCP provides parallel social/emotional and behavioral supports, and college and career readiness across all three tiers.

It closes equity gaps by design. Because services reach each and every student, the program is positioned to identify disparities in access (i.e., advanced coursework, college advising, and support services) and to intervene systematically with data to demonstrate progress.

It builds accountability. Through program assessment and outcome reporting, the CSCP demonstrates impact by closing the loop between the mission, the intervention, and the result.

How Counseling Staff Operate Within the Program

A CSCP coordinates several roles under one framework. The program defines *what* students need; the staff deliver it through direct and indirect services, organized into three tiers of services and supports across the three student developmental domains of social/emotional, academic, and career.

The Delivery “Deliver” Component

- **Direct Services:** These are in-person interaction with students: classroom and group instruction, appraisal and advisement (individual student planning), and short-term responsive counseling.
- **Indirect Services:** These are services *on behalf of* students such as consultation with teachers and parents, collaboration with staff and community partners, and referrals to outside resources.
- **Program Multi-Tiered and Multi-Domain System of Supports:** Tier 1 reaches *all* students (core instruction, universal screening, developmental lessons); Tier 2 serves *some* students (supplemental individualized supports, small groups); Tier 3 serves *a few* students (intensive, individualized support, and referrals). Services and supports are provided across the three student development domains at each tier.

National best practice and professional guidance (e.g., ASCA) recommends that counseling staff spend the large majority of their time, roughly 80%, in direct and indirect services with students, rather than non-program aligned duties that pull them away from being able to implement a comprehensive program.

School counselors

School counselors serve every student's social/emotional, academic, and career development. Their work includes classroom instruction on study skills, goal-setting, and social/emotional competencies; individual academic and postsecondary planning (connected to their Education Plan and Profile); small-group and short-term responsive counseling; college and career readiness advising; and crisis response. They are specialized generalists who ensure the developmental program reaches all students.

School social workers

School social workers are the primary link among home, school, and community. They address barriers to learning that may originate outside the classroom such as chronic absenteeism, family crises, housing and food insecurity, trauma, and basic-needs gaps. Their work includes case management, home visits, family engagement, crisis intervention, individual and small-group skill-building, and connecting students and families to community and social service resources. They frequently support students on IEPs and those whose circumstances put learning at risk.

School psychologists

School psychologists bring specialized expertise in assessment, evaluation, and intervention. They conduct cognitive, academic, and behavioral assessments; contribute to special education eligibility determinations; design and monitor behavioral and academic interventions; provide mental health interventions; and consult with staff on learning and behavior. Their data analysis strengthens the program's identification and progress-monitoring functions.

Other counseling and support staff

Depending on your program design and local needs, additional roles may support the program through a team approach, including child development specialists, mental health clinicians or therapists (often community-partnered), family and community liaisons, college and career advisers or graduation coaches, behavior interventionists, and substance-use counselors. In a comprehensive program these roles are coordinated, not redundant and not a replacement for professionally trained TSPC-licensed counseling staff. They each have clear responsibilities aligned to their own professional training and experiences and have shared data priorities connected to the program's goals.

How the roles work together

The strength of a CSCP is coordination. Some counseling staff roles may overlap intentionally but are clearly defined so that services complement rather than duplicate one another. For instance, a student might receive Tier 1 instruction from a school counselor, family-resource coordination from a school social worker, a behavioral assessment from a school psychologist, and a community-therapy referral through a liaison. This coordination is all documented, aligned, and monitored within the comprehensive program rather than delivered as disconnected efforts.

Your Role in Making It Work

A CSCP succeeds when leadership actively supports it. The highest-leverage moves administrators can take include these:

- **Identify a TSPC-licensed counseling program lead** and assign program responsibilities to counseling staff within their scope of license so qualified professionals are matched to the right work.
- **Protect time** by minimizing non-program aligned duties so counseling staff remain in student-facing services.
- **Integrate the program into your improvement plan** so its goals and your school's goals are one and the same.
- **Provide access to data** and time for staff to analyze it and set measurable goals for their program.
- **Support the convening of a counseling advisory council** to guide and support the program.
- **Work toward recommended staffing ratios of 250:1** so the program can serve every student meaningfully.
- **Expect and review outcome data** by treating the program as accountable, and share the results.

Summary

A Comprehensive School Counseling Program gives districts and schools a structured, measurable, equity-focused means of advancing the goals leaders are already accountable for. It is preventive rather than reactive, comprehensive rather than selective, and accountable rather than assumed. Funded, staffed, and protected, it turns programs from a crisis-response function into a strategic asset aligned with the district mission, and one that measurably supports students, families/caregivers, schools, and communities.