

# » Starting and Implementing a Comprehensive School Counseling Program

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When implementing Oregon’s Framework for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs, consider the steps below to help manage the transition to a comprehensive school counseling program.

## *Organize*

1. Read or review Oregon’s Framework for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs.
2. Communicate intent to implement a comprehensive counseling program with school and district administrators.
3. Use the program assessment to compare current program with Oregon’s Framework.

## *Plan and Design*

4. Identify areas of strength and areas to improve based on the results of the program assessment.
5. Review the school’s academic, attendance and behavioral data with a team of stakeholders, including administrators.
6. Prioritize and plan for areas for improvement based on school data with stakeholders.
7. Identify assessments and tools in the management component that correspond to the areas to improve.

## *Implement*

8. Identify collaborators needed for implementation.
9. Develop a one-to-three-year plan for implementation of the foundation, management, delivery and accountability components, including a timeline and persons responsible for each item in the plan.
10. Develop a plan with school administrators and present to advisory council.
11. Implement the plan, and collect data on program implementation using the tools in the management component.

## *Evaluate*

12. Analyze data collected to determine the results of the program following suggestions in the accountability component.
13. Share results with school, district staff, and school board.
14. Complete and analyze the program assessment each year to compare the school counseling program with Oregon’s Framework for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs.
15. After fully implemented, consider applying for the Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) designation to show how the school counseling program makes a difference in student achievement and success.

## Program Planning and Evaluation

Program planning and evaluation for the comprehensive school counseling program is an integral part of the overall school improvement planning and evaluation process. Initial planning establishes program objectives and sets a course of action. Regular program evaluations provide accountability measures and data to assess effectiveness and assist in improvement plans. These ongoing evaluation activities are part of the school's total assessment process.



### Phases of Program Development

#### **Organize**

- Establish commitment to action.
- Designate advisory structure and program team.
- Develop mission, vision, and beliefs statements.
- Secure initial policy board commitment.

#### **Plan**

- Assess student needs.
- Evaluate current program status.
- Identify program gaps.
- Develop program goals.
- Establish evaluation measures.

#### **Design**

- Develop program content model.
- Specify student outcomes and indicators.
- Identify program strategies and services.
- Assign program components.
- Write program plan.
- Develop implementation plan.

#### **Implement**

- Initiate program components.
- Provide staff development.

#### **Evaluate**

- Design evaluation based upon plans and goals.
- Carry out evaluation activities.
- Modify program based upon evaluation.

## Program Planning and Evaluation Indicators

- A written document specifying the mission, program philosophy, program goals, content and delivery strategies, and intended student outcomes has been developed and approved.
- A strategy for informing all stakeholders about program plans and outcomes has been developed.
- Staff assignments and other resources have been developed and approved.
- Staff development plans are in place.
- An annual evaluation plan is in place to inform continuous improvement efforts.



## Helpful Tips

Keep these following tips in mind as you begin the process of program development or improvement.

### Tip #1

***A comprehensive school counseling program is not the purview of the counseling department or the counselor alone - it is an integral piece of the entire educational program of the district.***

To that end, the program foundations must be laid with the broadest possible conversations and involvement. Review the vision of comprehensive counseling in the Introduction to the Oregon Framework. It states, "Counseling is an integral part of each school's total educational program and is essential for each and every student's success. It is developmental by design and includes sequential activities organized and implemented by licensed school counselors and other professionally trained staff in collaboration with administrators, teachers, students, parents, and other community partners." This building-wide, community level commitment stresses that the counseling staff responsibilities include program coordination, professional development of other staff, and partnering.

### Tip #2

***Undertaking the process of change will generate new results for students and staff.***

Oregon's Framework is based upon over thirty years of experience and research around the country on school counseling structures and outcomes. This research concludes that when a school implements a programmatic (comprehensive) approach to counseling services, stakeholders can expect improved academic achievement and successful school behaviors for students. School counselors will provide more services to more students and have greater administrator and staff understanding of the counseling role. School counseling work will have greater focus and have higher levels of impact on student success.

### Tip #3

***Change is incremental.***

According to OAR 581-022-2000 all school districts shall develop a process that provides each student the opportunity to create an education plan and build an education profile in grades 7 through 12 with adult guidance. The plan and profile shall be reviewed and updated periodically (at least annually) and be supported by a Comprehensive Counseling Program as defined in OAR 581-022-2060.

However, implementing any program is a process to be undertaken over time, and this framework is no exception. School districts are not expected to do everything proposed in the framework document all at once. Schools will likely have many components of this framework already working. Target improvements by setting annual goals and evaluating progress toward those.

### Tip #4

***Oregon's Framework does not impose any new standards or responsibilities, so use it as a vehicle to help you accomplish what is already required.***

The Framework encompasses program design concepts that are research-based, nationally accepted, high quality, successful counseling practices. The Framework provides a detailed view of the scaffolding needed to build a successful comprehensive counseling program that can serve the needs of each and every student. It suggests ways for implementing and supporting what is already envisioned in Oregon law and policy.

With program mission and goals, agreed-upon content, and continuous improvement strategies in place, school counselors will be able to advocate for the specific needs of students. Additionally, school counselors can provide leadership for the services and activities that are demonstrated to be critical for students, and for the systemic and collaborative work of school counseling.