



An Overview Of School Counselors In Kentucky

Research Report No. 465

Office Of Education Accountability

Kentucky Legislative Research Commission

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An Overview Of School Counselors In Kentucky

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Foreword

Through 2019 Regular Session Senate Bill 1, the General Assembly directed the Office of Education Accountability (OEA) to study the use of school guidance counselors' time in schools. OEA was required to report its findings to the Interim Joint Committee on Education no later than December 1, 2019. This study examines school counselors' duties and student assignment, salaries, and projected retirements, as well as the pipeline of incoming school counselors.

Staff would like to thank the Kentucky superintendents and school counselors who responded to the survey for this study.

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Summary

Through 2019 Regular Session Senate Bill 1, the 2019 General Assembly directed the Office of Education Accountability (OEA) to study the use of school guidance counselors' time in schools. In addition, the legislation requires superintendents to report to the Kentucky Department of Education the number and placement of school counselors in the district and to include the source of funding for each position, as well as a summary of job duties by each counselor and the approximate percent of time devoted to each duty over the course of the year. This information is due no later than November 1 each year.

The language in KRS 158.4416(3)(a) from SB 1 requires each school district to employ at least one school counselor in each school with the goal of having one school counselor for every 250 students and for 60 percent of that counselor's time to be spent in direct services to students. Some concerns are raised in this report:

- The statute is effective “[b]eginning July 1, 2021, or as funds and qualified personnel become available.” This means that the statute may have no effective date.
- The term *school* is not defined further in the statute, which could result in requiring school counselors at vocational schools, alternative schools, etc. Students at these schools may often be served by school counselors at other locations, and these schools often serve a small number of students.
- One counselor for every 250 students is a goal; it is not clear whether it is also a requirement. It is also not clear whether the statute intended there to be one full-time equivalent school counselor per 250 students.
- It is not clear whether the goal of having school counselors spending 60 percent of their time school on direct services to students is also a requirement.
- The term *direct services to students* is not defined in statute or regulation. Further clarification may be helpful.

In order to facilitate superintendents' statutorily required data submission, the Kentucky Department of Education provided a survey to superintendents that included typical and atypical activities for elementary, middle, and high school counselors. The survey had superintendents report the data by school level (elementary, middle, and high school) instead of at the individual counselor level. The survey alone does not meet the requirements of the statute because it was not collected for each counselor.

OEA offers two recommendations concerning the collection of data.

Recommendation 2.1

The information sent to the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) by superintendents should include a summary of job duties and work undertaken by each counselor and the approximate percentage of time devoted to each duty over the course of the year as required by KRS 158.4416. The current survey utilized by KDE does not meet the statutory requirement.

Recommendation 2.2

The term *direct services to students* should be defined more precisely through statutory or regulatory language.

In the 2018-2019 school year there were 1,391 school counselors working in A1 schools.^a In addition, another 98 school counselors were working in career and technical education centers, alternative schools, special education schools, or the district's central office, or in some cases working districtwide. An additional 1,156 counselors would need to be hired to reach the goal of 250 students per counselor. The associated cost would be approximately \$93 million each year.

Kentucky's average student-to-counselor ratio was 457.8 to 1. The average student-to-counselor ratio was 460 to 1 in elementary schools, 458 to 1 in middle schools, and 404 to 1 in high schools. Comparing the diversity of school counselors to teachers, counselors are 87 percent female and 92 percent white, while the teaching population is 78 percent female and 95 percent white. Districts pay 96 percent of school counselor salaries from districts' general funds. As of 2019, 14 percent of current school counselors can retire with at least 27 years of service; another 32 percent have 20 to 26 years of service. Over the last 3 years, approximately 264 candidates completed their school counseling degree each year. During that period, on average, 132 school counselors left school counseling each year.

When grouping schools by poverty, using the percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch, there is no difference in the average student-to-counselor ratio of 478:1 for both the 0 to 34.99 range and the 35 to 49.99 range. The data does show that counselors in schools with poverty rates above 75 percent have an average caseload of 43 fewer students than counselors in the lowest-poverty schools.

In 2019, 467 school counselors (57 percent) reported that they spent less than 60 percent of work time on direct services to students. There are differences in the amount of time spent on specific tasks across all levels of job duties. The average time spent on academic counseling is 3.5 percent for elementary school counselors and 25.2 percent for high school counselors. On average, elementary school counselors spend almost twice as much time as counselors in all other levels on student personal/social development.

Superintendents reported on the OEA survey that their district hires or contracts with staff who perform some school counseling duties. There were 137 superintendents who responded to this question.

- 111 districts reported hiring a total of 284 school psychologists.
- 46 districts reported hiring a total of 85 school social workers.
- 93 districts reported a total of 160 college and career coaches.
- 68 districts reported a total of 183 positions that are considered other qualified mental health professionals as defined in KRS 202A.011.

Some superintendents mentioned that they have free access to mental and behavior programs outside of the school district at no cost to the district.

^a A1 schools are under the administrative control of a principal and eligible to establish a school-based decision-making council. A1 schools are those not operated by or as part of another school. Examples of schools that are not A1 schools are alternative schools or career and technical schools.

School guidance counselors are included under the definition of *instructional leader* according to KRS 156.101(2) for the purpose of training hours under the program of the Effective Instructional Leadership Act (EILA). KRS 156.101 requires the Kentucky Board of Education to establish specific criteria for implementing EILA for public school employees holding valid certificates and performing responsibilities in a position for which an administrative certificate is required. The criteria were codified in 704 KAR 3:325, and the training must be comprehensive in nature and shall meet identified needs based upon the personnel evaluation, the individual professional growth plan, and self-assessments of the instructional leaders. The required training has to be approved by the Kentucky Board of Education, and instructional leaders must complete no fewer than 21 participant hours of instruction annually.

Almost half the school counselors surveyed reported participating in less than 21 hours of professional development related to their job duties as a school counselor in 2019. In addition, corrections are needed for 704 KAR 3:325 to address mentions of two regulations that do not currently exist.

OEA offers two recommendations concerning EILA credit for school counselors.

Recommendation 2.3

The Kentucky Board of Education should update 704 KAR 3:325 to address incorrect references to two regulations.

Recommendation 2.4

School districts, with support and guidance from the Kentucky Department of Education, should comply with 704 KAR 3:325 and ensure that school counselors are getting at least 21 hours of training each year related to their job duties as a school counselor.

Chapter 1

Introduction And Overview

Guidance counselors' roles have changed, and they are now called school counselors.

Over the last decade, the role of school counselors has changed. In the past, school counselors were called guidance counselors and their duties were primarily to assist students with course enrollment and selection in preparation for college. Currently, school counselors continue to guide students toward college and careers, but they also counsel students with social and emotional issues; write referrals for long-term support; review student data to identify needs; provide training to students and teachers; and collaborate with parents, teachers, and administrators.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) defines *direct student services* as in-person interactions with students and *indirect student services* as services delivered on behalf of students through interactions with others. ASCA recommends that school counselors spend 80 percent of their time on direct and indirect services to students.

According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA),

school counselors are uniquely qualified to address the developmental needs of all students through a school counseling program addressing the academic, career and social/emotional development of all students.

ASCA also offers recommendations about school counselor qualifications, ideal school counselor caseload, and appropriate duties.^{a 1} The ASCA National Model includes examples for both direct and indirect student services. *Direct services* refers to in-person interactions with students.² *Indirect services* refers to those delivered on behalf of students through interactions with others.³ ASCA recommends that school counselors spend 80 percent of their time providing direct and indirect services to students.⁴ ASCA also recommends that no more than 20 percent of a school counselor's time be spent in "program planning and school support activities." ASCA also describes some duties that it deems inappropriate for school counselors.⁵

SB 1 (2019) mandates that schools move toward one counselor for every 250 students and that school counselors spend 60 percent of their time on direct services to students. It also requires district superintendents to report to the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) the number of school counselors in the district, the funding source for each position, a summary of job duties, and the percentage of time devoted to each duty.

Data collected for this report indicate that in some Kentucky schools, counselors are performing duties that are not directly related to their jobs. These unrelated duties include preparing for graduation and award ceremonies, clerical recordkeeping, coordinating annual assessments, disciplining students, substitute teaching, and even stepping in for a principal who is not in the building. During the 2019 Regular Session, the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 1, which mandates that schools move toward the ASCA recommendation of one counselor for every 250 students and also that school counselors spend 60 percent of their

^a ASCA recommends 250 students per school counselor.

time on direct services to students. SB 1 also requires district superintendents to report to the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) no later than each November 1 the number of school counselors in the district, the funding source for each position, a summary of job duties, and the percentage of time devoted to each duty per counselor over the course of the year. The rest of this report will refer to the requirements of SB 1 in their form as codified in the Kentucky Revised Statutes.

Description Of This Study

This report includes student-to-counselor ratios at the elementary, middle, and high school levels; the average salary of school counselors; funding streams; and the actual usage of school counselors' time in schools.

SB 1 directed the Office of Education Accountability (OEA) to report the actual usage of school counselors' time in schools to the Interim Joint Committee on Education no later than December 1, 2019. This report also includes the methods by which school counselors are assigned to students; student-to-counselor ratios at the elementary, middle, and high school levels; the average salary of counselors; funding streams; the number of counselors who can retire; and the number of students graduating from school counseling programs.

Major Conclusions

- There were 1,391 school counselors in A1 schools in 2019.^b An additional 1,156 counselors would need to be hired to reach the goal of 250 students per counselor.^c The associated cost would be approximately \$93 million each year.
- In 2019, 467 school counselors (57 percent) reported that they spent less than 60 percent of work time on direct services to students.
- The average student-to-counselor ratio was 457.8 to 1 in A1 schools in 2019. The average student-to-counselor ratio was 460 to 1 in elementary schools, 458 to 1 in middle schools, and 404 to 1 in high schools in 2019. Seven districts did not employ a school counselor in 2019.
- In schools with a high percentage of low-income students, the average student-to-counselor ratio is 43 students less than in schools with the lowest percentage of low-income students.
- In 2019, 96 percent of school counselor salaries were paid from districts' general funds.

^b A1 schools are those not operated by or as part of another school. Examples of schools that are not A1 schools are alternative schools or career and technical schools.

^c The calculation of school counselors is based on the number of full-time equivalents.

- In 2019, 87 percent of school counselors were female and 92 percent were white. In 2019, the teaching population was 78 percent female and 95 percent white.
- Some districts have free access to mental and behavior programs outside of the school, or they hire psychologists, social workers, and career coaches to alleviate school counselors' workloads.
- KRS 158.4416(3)(a) requires each school district to employ at least one school counselor in each school, with the goal of having one school counselor for every 250 students. School counselors are required to spend 60 percent or more of their time in direct services to students.
 - The statute is effective “[b]eginning July 1, 2021, or as funds and qualified personnel become available.” This means that the statute may have no effective date.
 - The term *school* is not defined further in the statute, which could result in requiring school counselors at vocational schools, alternative schools, etc. Students at these schools may often be served by school counselors at other locations, and these schools often serve a small number of students.
 - One counselor for every 250 students is a goal; it is not clear whether it is also a requirement. It is also not clear whether the statute intended there to be one full-time equivalent (FTE) school counselor per 250 students.
 - Having school counselors spend 60 percent of their time on direct services to students is a goal; it is not clear whether it is also a requirement.
 - The term *direct services to students* is not defined in statute or regulation. Further clarification may be helpful.
- KRS 158.4416(3)(e) requires local superintendents to report the number and funding source for school counselors working in their districts. This information is already collected from districts by KDE using the professional staffing data (PSD) report. The information provided in the PSD report meets the statutory requirement of including the number and placement of school counselors in the district and the source of funding for each position. KDE includes several survey items concerning the number and funding source for school counselors in districts in aggregate form. The information from the survey does not meet the statutory requirement.
- As of 2019, 14 percent of school counselors can retire with at least 27 years of service; another 32 percent have 20 to 26 years of experience. Over the last 3 years, approximately 264 individuals are completing a school counseling degree

each year. During that period, on average, 132 school counselors left school counseling each year.

Data Used For The Report

The report includes data from KDE, the Council on Postsecondary Education, and surveys developed by the Office of Education Accountability (OEA) sent to school counselors and district superintendents.

Much of the data contained in the report was obtained from OEA's 2019 surveys of district superintendents, district finance officers, and school counselors in all Kentucky public schools.^d A copy of the superintendent and school counselor's survey appears in Appendix A. School counselors' email addresses were obtained from the student information system, Infinite Campus (IC), by KDE. In addition, data was obtained from site visits, the PSD report, and student membership. District staffing guidelines were provided by school districts. OEA also obtained data from the Council on Postsecondary Education concerning the number of school counseling degrees.

Appendix B includes a listing of the number of school counselors reported in IC compared to the number of school counselors reported in PSD reports and the number of school counselors reported on the superintendent survey.

This report refers to school years by the year in which they end. For example, the 2018-2019 school year is called the 2019 school year.

Organization Of The Report

Chapter 1 discusses the certification process for school counselors, neighboring states' requirements for school counselors, staffing guidelines, and how counselors are assigned to students.

The remainder of Chapter 1 reports on the certification process for school counselors in Kentucky and compares neighboring states' requirements for school counselors. The chapter ends with a discussion of district staffing guidelines for school counselors and how students are assigned to counselors.

Chapter 2 includes time spent on direct services to students, average pay, recruitment and retention, number of counselors needed to reach the goal of a 250:1 student-to-counselor ratio, and cost.

Chapter 2 reports the number of students assigned to counselors, the percentage of time that school counselors spend on direct services to students, and other staff who may perform some school counseling services. In addition, school counselor average pay, rank, and years of service, and the number of school counselors enrolled in preparation programs each year are reported. The chapter ends with the number of school counselors who will need to be hired for schools to reach the goal of one counselor to every 250 students, along with the cost associated with this goal.

^d The superintendent response rate was 84 percent, and the school counselor response rate was 69 percent.

Neighboring State Requirements Of School Counselors

West Virginia is the only neighboring state that mandates how much time school counselors spend providing direct counseling to students. Missouri, Tennessee, and Virginia are the only neighboring states that have required student-to-counselor ratios.

Table 1.1 shows the school counselor staffing requirements for Kentucky and its neighboring states. West Virginia is the only neighboring state that mandates how much time school counselors spend providing direct counseling to students. Missouri, Tennessee, and Virginia have set requirements on the number of students per counselor; Indiana does not have a requirement, but it has a recommended student-to-counselor ratio. Illinois and Ohio have no requirements regarding school counselor staffing.

**Table 1.1
Kentucky And Neighboring States' School Counselor Staffing Requirements, 2019**

State	School Counselor Requirements
Illinois	No requirement.
Indiana	Recommended to have one counselor to every 600 students in grades 1-6 and one counselor to every 300 students in grades 7-12.
Kentucky	Beginning July 1, 2021, or as funds and qualified personnel become available, each school district and each public charter school shall employ at least one school counselor in each school with the goals of having one school counselor to every 250 students and having the school counselors spend 60 percent or more of their time in direct services to students.
Missouri	Requires one counselor to every 500 students but recommends one counselor to every 301-375 students.
Ohio	No requirement.
Tennessee	One counselor to every 500 students in grades K-6 and one counselor to every 350 students in grades 7-12.
Virginia	Elementary schools require one full-time counselor to every 500 students, middle schools require one full-time counselor to every 400 students, and high schools require one full-time counselor to every 350 students.
West Virginia	School counselors must spend 75 percent of time in a direct counseling relationship with students.

Source: American School Counselor Association. State School Counseling Mandates and Legislation. n.d. Web. Accessed Oct. 1, 2019; KRS 158.4416.

Kentucky School Counselor Certification Requirements

School counselors in Kentucky can be certified through traditional or alternative programs in school counseling.

In Kentucky, school counselors are not required to be certified teachers; however, most school counselors are certified teachers. The minimum degree required is a master's degree in school counseling. There are two steps/levels of school counselor certification: provisional and standard. Both of these certificates are issued for 5 years. Experience in the role of school counseling can be used to renew teaching certificates; however, it cannot be used to renew administrative certificates. The requirements for the provisional and standard certificate are outlined in 16 KAR 3:060. Table 1.2 shows the certification requirements for school counselors in Kentucky.

**Table 1.2
Kentucky School Counselor Certification Requirements, 2019**

Certification	Qualifications	Rank	Renewal	Reissuance
Provisional	Completion of an approved master's program.	Issued at Rank II	Completion of additional graduate credits.*	Additional graduate hours, or completion of coursework for standard certification.
Standard (Options 1 and 2)	Completion of an approved master's program and completion of additional graduate coursework.**	Issued at Rank II	Renewed upon expiration with completion of EILA hours documented by superintendent.***	Completion of school counselor-specific training, or completion of additional graduate coursework.†

*Completion of a minimum of 9 semester hours of graduate credit in school counseling or the standard certification program. Out-of-state coursework requires the completion of an additional 3 to 6 hours from an approved graduate counseling or school counseling program.

**Standard certification option 1 requires at least 1 year of teaching experience and 1 year of counseling experience. Standard option 2 requires no teaching experience, but 2 years of school counseling experience.

***If an individual has completed the standard certification program, but lacks the 1 year of school counseling experience, then the provisional certification can be renewed on teaching experience. EILA = Effective Instructional Leadership Act.

†If the standard certificate lapses, it can be reissued by first completing 12 clock hours of counselor role-specific training for each year since the expiration of the certification up to a maximum of 75 clock hours, or it can be reissued on 9 new graduate hours.

Source: Kentucky Department of Education.

School counselor certification is also available via the alternative certification administrator program for school counselors established in 16 KAR 9:080. Eastern Kentucky University and Northern Kentucky University are the only educator preparation providers (EPPs) that offer this route to school counselor certification. A candidate with a bachelor's degree may be eligible as long as the candidate meets the admission requirements established in 16 KAR 5:020, and the requirements of the approved program. A candidate may hold a temporary provisional

certificate for 2 years. The candidate must meet the requirements for the provisional school counselor certificate by the end of the second year.

16 KAR 5:030 also allows EPPs to recognize competency and proficiency by conducting proficiency evaluations of candidates seeking initial certification, another certification area, endorsement, or extension. Proficiency evaluations allow an EPP to assess an educator's competency and proficiency by considering previous education, comparable experience, or proficiency assessment at a level comparable to the usual requirements in the content area in which the educator is seeking certification. Two EPPs offer certification through proficiency evaluations for school counselors.⁶

Kentucky does not require school counselors to take an examination to become certified.

Kentucky is one of 14 states that do not require some type of examination to become a certified school counselor.^{c 7}

Allocation And Assignment Of School Counselors

Staffing guidelines for school counselors are approved by local boards of education.

Local board staffing guidelines and procedures determine how staff are allocated to each school. Districts were requested to submit a copy of their 2018-2019 staffing procedures that specifically outline how school counselors are allocated to schools. If a district did not have an approved procedure, it was asked to explain its methodology for assigning school counselors.

Most districts allocate school counselor positions to schools according to student enrollment. Other methods are also used.

Table 1.3 explains how districts allocate school counselors. Student enrollment is the most popular method districts use to assign counselors to schools. The second most popular method for assigning counselors to schools is by the level of school, regardless of how many students are enrolled. Using this method, all elementary schools could receive one counselor and all high schools could receive two counselors, regardless of differences in student enrollment. Ten districts reported that they give the school-based decision-making council discretionary positions and allow them to decide which positions they fill. Normally these discretionary positions include assistant principals, media specialists, deans of students, school counselors, and coordinators.

^c Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut, Iowa, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Virginia, and Wisconsin also do not require certification examinations for school counselors.

Table 1.3
District Staffing Guidelines Or Staffing Procedures On Allocation Of School Counselors, School Year 2019

District Staffing Guidelines Or Procedures	District Responses	Percent Of Districts
All schools receive counselors based on student enrollment	34	33%
All schools receive counselors based on level	20	19
Discretionary positions allocated based on enrollment	10	10
Middle and high receive based on level of school	9	9
All schools receive one counselor	8	8
District allocates as board positions based on school needs	5	5
One counselor to serve entire district	5	5
Counselors allocated based on enrollment and need of the school	4	4
Other	6	6
No counselors allocated to schools	2	2

Note: A total of 103 district finance officers responded to this survey.

Source: OEA survey.

School Counselor Assignment Of Students

The majority of survey respondents were the only counselor in their building and had all students assigned to them. Other counselors stated that they were assigned to a group of students within an alphabetical range. Approximately 22 percent of high school counselors reported being assigned to students by grade level.

Principals determine how students are assigned to school counselors within each school. Table 1.4 shows how school counselors responded to a survey question regarding how students were assigned in the 2019 school year. The majority of survey respondents, 515 counselors, were the only counselor in their building and had all students assigned to them. Of this group, the majority were in elementary and middle schools. Nearly 33 percent of high school counselors stated that they were assigned to a group of students within an alphabetical range. Approximately 22 percent of high school counselors reported being assigned to students by grade level.

Table 1.4
Assignment Of School Counselors By School Level
School Year 2019

Survey Responses	K-12 School	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Total Respondents
I am the only counselor in my school	7	326	152	67	515
Counselors are assigned to a specific grade level	3	33	61	80	175
Counselors are assigned to a group of students alphabetically	0	1	22	122	143
Counselors are assigned to students based on responsibilities	1	14	13	35	63
Counselors are assigned to an incoming class of students	0	2	27	33	61
Not assigned—take them as they come	1	9	26	3	37
Academy grouping	0	0	0	32	32
Gender based	2	0	1	0	3
Total	14	385	302	372	1,029

Note: School counselors who worked in multiple school levels were counted in each of the levels they worked. Elementary School = grades PK-5; Middle School = grades 6-8; High School = grades 9-12.

Source: OEA survey.

Chapter 2

Number Of School Counselors

In 2019, there were 1,391 school counselors working in A1 schools. The student-to-counselor ratio was 457.8 to 1.

In 2019, there were 1,391 FTE school counselors working in 1,156 A1 schools with a population of 636,753 students.^a For A1 schools the student-to-counselor ratio was 457.8 to 1 in 2019. There were 98 FTE counselors who worked outside of A1 schools. Districts employed school counselors at non-A1 schools, such as career and technical schools, alternative schools, or special education schools. There were also some counselors not assigned to a specific school but coded to a districtwide function or working in central office.

Most school counselors are female and white.

In 2019, most school counselors were female (87 percent) and white (92 percent). The teaching population in 2019 was 78 percent female and 95 percent white.

Most districts had a student-to-counselor ratio of 251-500. Four districts met the goal of 250 students to 1 counselor, and 7 districts had no school counselors in 2019.

Figure 2.A shows a map of districts with their 2019 student-to-school counselor ratios. There are seven districts that did not employ a school counselor in 2019. Eleven districts had a student-to-school counselor ratio above 750; however, most districts (118) had student-to-school counselor ratios of 251 to 500. In 2019, there were four districts that met the goal of one school counselor for every 250 students established in KRS 158.4416.

^a The number of A1 schools was obtained from the 2018-2019 Kentucky School Report Card. The number of students was obtained from 2018-2019 Superintendent's Annual Attendance Report.

Student-to-counselor ratios are higher in smaller schools than in larger schools.

The ratio of school membership to school counselors in A1 schools is reflected in Table 2.1.^b The table divides schools by student membership range and shows the student-to-counselor ratio for the combined number of students and counselors in each range as well as the average student-to-counselor ratio for all schools in the range. The table shows greater student-to-counselor ratios in the smaller schools, with ratios generally declining as membership grows. In schools with a membership of less than 200, the average number of students per counselor was 479 to 1, compared with 444 to 1 in the largest schools with membership greater than 1,000.

Table 2.1
Number Of Full-Time Equivalent School Counselors By School Membership
School Year 2019

School Membership	Number Of Students	Number Of FTE Counselors	Number Of Students Per Counselor	Average Student-Counselor Ratio For Schools In Range
>200	9,644	19.87	485.4	478.8
200 to 499	203,785	435.60	467.8	478.1
500 to 749	214,031	432.03	495.4	433.7
750 to 999	80,597	175.10	460.3	435.5
1,000+	128,696	328.50	391.8	444.0

Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Student eligibility for the federal free or reduced-priced lunch program (FRPL) is commonly used as an indicator of poverty. ASCA recommends that students from low-income families have greater access to school counselors than their peers from higher-income families.

Schools with 50 percent or more of students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch have lower student-to-counselor ratios than schools with lower percentages of such students.

Table 2.2 compares student-to-counselor ratios in schools by the percentage of students eligible for FRPL. The table shows lower student-to-counselor ratios in the highest- versus lowest-poverty schools. At 436, the average student-to-counselor ratio in the higher-poverty schools (above 75 percent eligible for FRPL) is 43 students lower than the average student-to-counselor ratio of 479 in the lowest-poverty schools (between 0 and 34.99 percent eligible for FRPL). However, the highest-poverty schools do not have lower ratios than schools where 50 to 74.99 percent of students are eligible for FRPL.

^b Membership is a count of students enrolled as of the last day of school.

Table 2.2
Number Of Full-Time Equivalent School Counselors
By Percentage Of Students Eligible For Free And Reduced-Price Lunch
School Year 2019

Schools' Free And Reduced-Price Lunch Percentage	Number Of Students	Number Of FTE Counselors	Number Of Students Per Counselor	Average Student-Counselor Ratio For Schools In Range
0 to 34.99	53,579	108.49	493.9	478.8
35 to 49.99	124,319	264.97	469.2	478.1
50 to 74.99	354,078	789.23	448.6	433.7
>75.0	104,777	228.40	458.7	435.5

Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

High schools have the lowest student-to-counselor ratios, followed by middle schools and elementary schools.

Table 2.3 shows student-to-counselor ratios by school level. Average student-to-counselor ratios were lowest in high schools (404), followed by middle schools (458) and elementary schools (461). Appendix C shows the student-to-counselor ratios for schools that had more than one level.^c

The relatively lower student-to-counselor ratios in high schools may reflect the additional responsibilities taken on by high school counselors. In addition to the social-emotional and academic readiness issues that are addressed at all school levels, high school counselors provide college and career counseling and assist students with the college application process, including securing teacher recommendations, identifying scholarships, and filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

Table 2.3
Number Of Full-Time Equivalent School Counselors By School Level
School Year 2019

Level Of School	Number Of Students	Number Of FTE Counselors	Number Of Students Per Counselor	Average Student Per Counselor Count By Type Of School
Elementary	286,871	543.11	528.2	460.6
Middle	127,365	287.42	443.1	457.6
High	179,856	474.63	378.9	404.3

Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

^c There were 42,661 students who attended elementary/middle schools, middle/high schools, and elementary/middle/high schools.

Counselors' Time Spent On Direct And Indirect Services

Kentucky law sets a goal of school counselors spending 60 percent or more of their time on direct services to students. ASCA recommends that 80 percent of school counselors' time should be spent on direct and indirect services to students.

KRS 158.4416 sets as a goal that school counselors spend 60 percent or more of their time on direct services to students. ASCA recommends that a minimum of 80 percent of a school counselor's time should be spent providing school counseling services to students or on behalf of students.^{d 8} In order to determine the amount of time counselors spent on direct services, OEA sent a survey to individuals reported in IC as school counselors.

Direct Services To Students

Direct services to students include time spent providing school counseling services to students. Job duties that are direct services include academic counseling, mental health counseling, counseling students with attendance or discipline problems, and working with students on their personal or social development.

Across all grade levels, school counselors spent 53.4 percent of their time on direct services to students. Only high school counselors spent more than 60 percent of their time on direct services to students.

Table 2.4 reports the average direct service job duties for a school counselor. Only counselors working in A1 schools were used for this analysis. The average of school counselors' time spent on direct services to students was 53.4 percent across all schools. This is below the established goal of 60 percent of a school counselor's time spent in direct services to students discussed in KRS 158.4416. At 60.6 percent of time spent on direct services to students, only school counselors in high schools are above the threshold. School counselors serving elementary schools, middle schools, and schools with multiple levels fall short of the 60 percent goal.

High school counselors spent more time than counselors in any other grade level on academic counseling. Elementary school counselors spent more time than counselors at any other grade level on student personal and social development.

There are differences in the amount of time spent on specific tasks across all levels of job duties. The average time spent on academic counseling is 3.5 percent for elementary school counselors and 25.2 percent for high school counselors. On average, elementary school counselors spend almost twice the amount of time as counselors at all other levels on student personal/social development.

^d This includes direct and indirect services.

Table 2.4
Average Percentage Of Time A School Counselor
Spent On Direct Services To Students By School Level
School Year 2019

Direct Service Job Duties For School Counselors	All Schools	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Multiple School Levels
Academic counseling	13.4%	3.5%	11.3%	25.2%	14.2%
Mental health counseling	18.2	19.4	21.6	15.3	16.5
Student personal/social development	10.2	14.8	6.9	7.5	7.1
Counseling students with attendance and discipline problems	9.3	8.8	9.9	9.5	10.1
Other counseling duties not mentioned	2.3	1.6	2.0	3.1	2.7
Total average percent of time spent on direct services	53.4%	48.1%	51.7%	60.6%	50.6%

Note: "Multiple School Levels" includes counselors who work at a school of more than one level and itinerant counselors who work at schools that are of different levels. This table reflects A1 schools only. Job duties are shortened here; see Appendix A for complete information on what was included in each job duty question.

Source: OEA school counselor survey.

Of the school counselors responding to the OEA survey, 57 percent do not meet the statutory goal of spending 60 percent of their time on direct services to students.

Table 2.5 shows, by school level, the number of school counselors who do not meet the statutory goal of spending 60 percent of their time in direct services to students. Of the school counselors responding to the survey, 467 (57 percent) do not meet that goal.

Table 2.5
Number Of School Counselors
Not Meeting The Goal Of Spending 60 Percent Of Time
On Direct Services To Students By Level
School Year 2019

School Level	Number Of Counselors At School Level	Number Of Counselors Not Meeting 60% Goal
Elementary	328	221
Middle	158	95
High	299	124
Serving multiple levels	39	27
Total	824	467

Source: OEA school counselor survey.

Indirect Services To Students

Indirect services to students include classroom management and assisting students with special needs in meetings. Elementary school counselors spent more time in meetings with special needs children than counselors at any other school level.

Indirect services to students includes school counselor job duties that are performed with other adults on behalf of students. Job duties that are indirect services include meeting with teachers to discuss classroom management suggestions and attending Admissions and Release Committee (ARC) meetings.

Table 2.6 shows the percentage of time that school counselors reported spending on indirect services to students. These are duties that are within ASCA’s recommendation of 80 percent of school counselors’ time being spent providing school counseling services to students or on behalf of students. Of these indirect services, assisting students with special needs (including ARC meetings) took the most time. At all levels, counselors reported spending approximately 12 to 25 percent of their time providing indirect services to students. In addition, elementary school counselors reported spending 20.1 percent of their time assisting students with special needs in ARC meetings compared to the high school counselors’ time at 9.6 percent.

Table 2.6
Average Percentage Of Time A School Counselor Spent On Indirect Services To Students
School Year 2019

Indirect Service Job Duties For School Counselors	All Schools	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Multiple School Levels
Classroom management suggestions to teachers	3.4%	4.6%	3.2%	2.2%	2.7%
Assisting students with special needs (includes ARC meetings)*	15.2	20.1	15.6	9.6	14.6
Total average percent of time spent on indirect services	18.6%	24.7%	18.8%	11.8%	17.3%

Note: “Multiple School Levels” includes counselors who work at a school of more than one level and itinerant counselors who work schools that are of different levels. This table reflects A1 schools only. Job duties are shortened here; see Appendix A for complete information on what was included in each job duty question.

*The OEA survey did not differentiate between different services for students with special needs. It is possible that some of these duties were direct services to students. ARC = Admissions and Release Committee.

Source: OEA school counselor survey.

Duties That Are Not Direct Or Indirect Services To Students

There are duties that school counselors are assigned that are neither direct nor indirect services to students. These duties are often school support and program planning. ASCA views some of these duties, such as professional development for school counselors, as appropriate for school counselors. Other duties, such as maintaining student records, covering classes, assisting with duties in the principal’s office, and administering tests, are considered inappropriate counseling duties by ASCA.⁹

Counselors spent more of their time on testing duties than any other duty that was not a direct or indirect service.

Table 2.7 shows the average percentage of time a school counselor spends on duties that are not direct or indirect services to students. ASCA recommends that no more than 20 percent of a school counselor’s time be spent on school support and program

planning.¹⁰ Of these duties, administering tests takes up the most time at all levels. On average, Kentucky schools are not meeting the ASCA recommendations at any level.

Table 2.7
Average Percentage Of Time A School Counselor Spends On Duties That Are Not Direct Or Indirect Services To Students School Year 2019

Indirect Service Job Duties For School Counselors	All Schools	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Multiple School Levels
Assigning disciplinary actions	1.3%	2.1%	1.1%	0.5%	1.8%
Administering tests such as K-PREP, MAP, etc.	9.1	7.7	9.5	10.2	11.2
Maintaining student records	5.1	4.9	5.4	5.2	6.4
Specified noncounseling duties	5.4	5.2	6.5	5.1	5.4
School administrative duties	1.9	2.9	1.3	1.0	1.9
Other noncounseling duties not mentioned above	1.8	1.1	2.3	2.4	1.8
Professional development	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.7
Total time spent on duties that are not direct or indirect services	28.0%	27.3%	29.4%	27.7%	32.2%

Note: "Multiple School Levels" includes counselors who work at a school of more than one level and itinerant counselors who work schools that are of different levels. This table reflects A1 schools only. Job duties are shortened here; see Appendix A for complete information on what was included in each job duty question. K-PREP = Kentucky Performance Rating for Educational Progress; MAP = Measures of Academic Progress. Source: OEA school counselor survey.

Superintendent And Counselor Comments

Over half of the superintendents who responded to the OEA survey stated that school counselors had too many duties assigned to them and not enough time to counsel students.

As shown in Table 2.8, of the 57 superintendents who offered comments on the OEA survey related to counselors' duties, over half (53 percent) stated that school counselors had too many duties assigned to them and not enough time to counsel students. Several superintendents stated that the high school counselors are spending a large amount of their time dealing with required assessments, as they also serve as the building assessment coordinator. In addition, there were several who mentioned that school counselors spend a lot of time with administrative duties, such as ARC meetings. One counselor stated:

Having an [early childhood education] consulting teacher this year as the main ARC chairperson freed me up substantially and allowed me to serve as an actual counselor. The time spent in the past on ARC Chairperson duties was tremendous. I have been more engaged with students and gotten to know more about them, especially those who are most in need of individual conversations, small group experiences and the like.

Three superintendents mentioned that they had concerns with SB 1. One noted that the bill should define *time with students*. Another stated that the bill did not take research on labor market availability into account when requiring districts to add counselors. One response addressed a variety of concerns, including what the superintendent feels are excessive professional development requirements for counselors:

We do have an agreement with Pathways who provide mental health workers in each of our buildings at no cost to the district. We currently do not have any issues with recruiting counselors, but we do anticipate great concern with filling positions that would be needed in order to meet the 1:250 ratio mandated in KRS 158.4416 (as funds become available). This would cause us to have to hire at least seven more counselors. Hiring seven more at one time would be very difficult to find qualified candidates. Counselors are the only role that must complete 24 hours of professional development (as all certified teachers) **and** EILA hours (as all administrators). One of these need to be taken off their plate.

Table 2.8
Superintendents' Comments Regarding Usage Of School Counselors' Time, School Year 2019

Category Of Comments	Total	Percent Of Total
Not enough time for counseling, too many other duties	30	52.6%
Lack of funding	10	17.5
Adequate counseling time	7	12.3
Other	7	12.3
Concerns with legislation	3	5.3

Source: OEA superintendent school counselor survey.

School Counselor Reporting Requirements For Superintendents

Superintendents must report to KDE the number and placement of school counselors in their districts, the source of funding for each position, a summary of job duties and work undertaken by each counselor, and the approximate percentage of time devoted to each duty.

KRS 158.4416 requires district superintendents to report the number and placement of school counselors in each district, the source of funding for each position, a summary of job duties and work undertaken by each counselor, and the approximate percentage of time devoted to each duty over the course of the year. Superintendents must submit this information to KDE no later than November 1 each year.

KDE developed a survey that included typical and atypical school counselor activities. The data was reported at the school level. This allowed for a uniform survey to compare across all districts.

In order to facilitate the statutorily required data submission and help districts in gathering information, KDE provided a survey that included typical and atypical activities for elementary, middle, and high school counselors. The list of activities was developed by ASCA. The time spent on job duties is reported by elementary, middle, and high school counselors. Superintendents were to enter the approximate percentage of time that school counselors are spending on each listed activity. Because the data submission is in a uniform format, the survey also allows data to be compared across districts and years, should those data be required for future examination.

The survey that KDE developed does not meet the requirements of KRS 158.4416.

KRS 158.4416 specifically states that the superintendents' report shall include a summary of the job duties and work undertaken by each counselor and the approximate percentage of time devoted to each duty over the course of the year. Because the survey asks superintendents to approximate the percentage of time spent by school level rather than by each individual counselor and does not ask superintendents to list the duties assigned to each counselor, the survey alone does not meet the requirements of the bill.

The data from the KDE survey on funding and staffing does not meet the requirements of KRS 188.4416; however, the professional staffing data that is collected by KDE does meet the statutory requirements.

The KDE survey also asks about the number of school counselors working in districts, and about their funding source. This information is already collected from districts by KDE using the professional staffing data report. The information provided in the PSD report meets the statutory requirement of including the number and placement of school counselors in the district and the source of funding for each position. The information from the survey does not meet the statutory requirement.

OEA offers the following two recommendations pertaining to KRS 158.4416:

Recommendation 2.1

Recommendation 2.1

The information sent to the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) by superintendents should include a summary of job duties and work undertaken by each counselor and the approximate percentage of time devoted to each duty over the course of the year as required by KRS 158.4416. The current survey utilized by KDE does not meet the statutory requirement.

Recommendation 2.2

Recommendation 2.2

The term *direct services to students* should be defined more precisely through statutory or regulatory language.

Other Support Staff

Superintendents reported on the OEA survey they hire several other staff who perform school counseling duties. There were 93 districts that reported hiring college and career coaches, and 111 districts reported hiring school psychologists.

The OEA superintendent survey asked superintendents if they hired district employees or contract for staff who may perform duties that allow school counselors to spend more time engaging in direct services to students. A total of 137 superintendents responded to this question. As reported in Table 2.9, 111 districts reported hiring a total of 284 school psychologists, 46 districts reported hiring a total of 85 school social workers, and 93 districts reported hiring a total of 160 college and career coaches. In addition, there were 68 districts that reported a total of 183 positions that are considered other qualified mental health professionals as defined in KRS 202A.011. These could be licensed nurses, marriage and family therapists, psychiatrists, physician assistants, etc. Some districts are receiving these services free of charge by contracting with community agencies and other entities.

**Table 2.9
School District Superintendents Reporting Staff
Who Perform Functions Of School Counselors
School Year 2019**

Type Of Staff	Total Districts	Total Reported Full-Time Equivalents
School psychologist	111	284.47
School social worker	46	85.40
College and/or career coach	93	159.95
Other qualified mental health professional	68	183.00

Source: OEA superintendent school counselor survey.

A superintendent of a district where a large percentage of students live in poverty stated:

The district contracts with KRCC [Kentucky River Community Care] (3 full time) and the Elgin Foundation [for 0.5] social workers to provide counseling services for K-12 students. The board has one full time guidance counselor at the high school which is grades 6-12 and one career coach which is a non-FTE person. It also has two full-time college and career specialist[s] funded through GEAR UP [Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for

Undergraduate Programs]. We have more counselors now than ever with no additional positions that the board has to pick up.

The Green River Regional Education Cooperative was awarded almost \$4 million in federal funds to use on mental health services.

The Green River Regional Educational Cooperative (GRREC) was recently awarded a grant of almost \$4 million by the US Department of Education. It began October 1, 2019, and runs through 2024. The grant will serve 14 districts, and GRREC plans to hire six licensed mental health professionals to support these districts. In addition, GRREC will offer mental health screeners and assessments to schools, provide training in trauma-informed care, create a counseling hotline for students, and provide youth mental health first aid to staff.¹¹

School Counselor Salary And Pipeline

Average Salary

Most school counselors hold a Rank I teaching certificate, and the average salary was \$68,355.75 per year.

Most school counselors (81 percent) hold a Rank I teaching certification with the remainder holding a Rank II. School counselors are paid according to the certified salary schedule adopted each year by each local board of education. The average school counselor's total pay across all districts is \$68,355.75.

Average Base Pay

The average base pay for school counselors was \$60,392 in 2019.

The salary schedule adopted by each local board of education will include the number of contract days employees will work for the year. The number of contract days ranged from 185 to 188 days in school year 2019. These days are commonly called an employee's base pay. In 2019, the average base pay for school counselors was \$60,392.

Pay For Extra Days

Most district require school counselors to work above the minimum number of days. In 2019 the average number of extra days a high school counselor worked was 25 days.

Most districts require school counselors to work extra days before and after the regular school year to perform administrative duties. The average number of extra days worked differs by school type. As shown in Table 2.10, high school counselors work an average of 25 extra days, while elementary school counselors work an average of only 12 extra days. The number of extra days worked by school counselors affects the pay they receive. The average extra-day pay in school year 2019 was \$6,319.20 for counselors who received pay for extra days.

Table 2.10
Average School Counselor Extra Days Worked
School Year 2019

Type Of School	Average Extra Days
Elementary	12
Elementary/middle	13
Elementary/middle/high	20
Middle	22
Middle/high	25
High	25

Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Extra Duty Pay

Only 32 percent of districts provide school counselors with extra duty pay for being an administrator. The average extra duty pay for school counselors was \$4,474.60 in 2019.

In addition to extra days, some districts (32 percent) give school counselors extra duty pay for serving in an administrative role in the school. The extra duty pay is approved by the local school board when the salary schedule is adopted each year. The average extra duty pay in school year 2019 was \$4,474.60 for counselors who received extra duty pay.

Funds Paying For School Counselor Salaries

School districts pay the majority of school counselors' salaries from their general funds.

The majority of school counselor salaries are being paid out of districts' general funds. Districts' general funds are mostly made up of local and state Support Education Excellence in Kentucky dollars. Table 2.11 shows that 96 percent of salaries were paid from the general fund. On average, 3 percent of salaries were paid from the special revenue fund from federal grants. Title I funding, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) B, and IDEA B Preschool grants are the most common federal grants used in funding school counselor salaries. The school safety grant, funding from the Kentucky Educational Collaborative For State Agency Children, and the funding from the Department of Juvenile Justice are the most common types of state grants used for funding school counselor salaries.

Table 2.11
Total Amount Of School Counselor Salaries By Funding Type
School Year 2019

Fund	Expenditure Type	Amount	Percent
General fund	State and local	\$97,598,589	96%
Special revenue fund	Local	262,133	0
Special revenue fund	State	858,702	1
Special revenue fund	Federal	3,028,107	3
Total		\$101,747,531	100

Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Federal Funds And Professional Development

Federal funds are intended to supplement state and local funds and are not allowed to be used to replace expenses normally paid with state and local funds. For example, IDEA-B funds cannot pay for a school counselor for a student with a disability if the district already employs school counselors to support all students. However, if a district does not employ school counselors to evaluate students for a disability, then the school counselor could be paid with IDEA-B funds.¹²

Title I funds can be used to help pay for school counselors' salaries if the additional counselors are above the district's staffing guidelines.

Title I funds have the same guidelines. When Kentucky requires all schools to have a school counselor, or if a district's staffing guidelines currently mandate that schools receive a school counselor, then Title I funds cannot be used to pay for a school counselor, but if the district provides one counselor for every 500 students and a school wants to add school counselors to lower the student-to-counselor ratio to 250 students, Title I funds can pay for the additional school counselors.¹³

Professional Development

School counselors are defined as instructional leaders in statute. They must receive no less than 21 hours of professional development related to their job as a school counselor each year.

According to KRS 156.101(2), school guidance counselors are included under the definition of *instructional leader* for the purpose of hours of program training under the Effective Instructional Leadership Act (EILA).⁶ School counselors are required to annually complete training approved by the Kentucky Board of Education—no less than 21 participant hours of instruction. Any instructional leader who fails to complete the training requirements shall be placed on probation for 1 year. If the required training for the prior year and current year is not completed during the probationary period, then KDE must forward the information to the Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB), which shall revoke the instructional leader's certificate. The requirement for EILA hours is found in 704 KAR 3:325.

704 KAR 3:325 refers to two regulations that do not exist.

Corrections Needed For 704 KAR 3:325. The first paragraph of 704 KAR 3:325 discusses the regulation's statutory and regulatory authority. It states that KRS 156.101 requires the Kentucky Board of Education to establish specific criteria for implementing EILA for public school employees holding valid certificates and performing responsibilities in a position for which administration certification is required by EPSB pursuant to 704 KAR Chapter 20, which does not exist. 704 KAR 3:325, secs. 4 and 5 both mention

⁶ These are commonly referred to as EILA hours or EILA credits.

the Standards and Indicators for School Improvement established in 703 KAR 5:120. This regulation does not exist.

Recommendation 2.3

Recommendation 2.3

The Kentucky Board of Education should update 704 KAR 3:325 to address incorrect references to two regulations.

School counselors also participate in an additional 24 hours of professional development. Those 24 hours are required of all certified staff.

School Counselor Professional Development Requirements.

704 KAR 3:325, sec. 3(1)(c) requires that the training for instructional leaders be comprehensive in nature and meet identified needs based upon the personnel evaluation, the individual professional growth plan, and self-assessments of the instructional leaders. In addition to the EILA hours requirement for school counselors, counselors are also required to participate in 24 hours of professional development like all other certified staff.

School counselors reported on the OEA survey that they also have other professional development hours that they are required to complete for other roles they perform in their schools. These include assessment, resilience, and targeted support and improvement trainings.

Several school counselors reported being the building assessment coordinator, which requires participation in role-specific professional development each year. KRS 160.346 requires KDE to identify schools for targeted support and improvement (TSI). A counselor working at a TSI school may be required to participate in professional development for threat assessment, resilience, postsecondary scheduling, special education, and targeted support and improvement training.

Almost half of the counselors responding to the OEA survey reported that they are receiving half of the required professional development related to their job as a school counselor.

Professional Development Hours Reported By Counselors.

Table 2.12 shows how many hours counselors reported receiving directly related to school counseling in school year 2019. School counselors reported on the OEA survey that on average they are participating in approximately 22 hours of professional development a year. It is unclear whether all school counselors answered the question correctly, because many stated that they participate in over 100 hours of professional development each year. In addition, 5 percent of respondents said that they received no professional development hours relating to their job duties as a school counselor in school year 2019. An additional 15 percent stated that they received only 1 to 9 hours. Almost half of the school counselors reported participating in less than 21 hours of professional development related to their duties as a school counselor in school year 2019.

Table 2.12
Number Of Professional Development Hours Directly Related
To School Counseling Received By School Counselors
School Year 2019

Number Of Hours	Responses	Percent
0	44	5%
1-9	121	15
10-20	246	29
21-32	290	35
33-49	74	9
50-100+	59	7
Total	834	100%

Source: OEA school counselor survey.

Some school counselors commented that only half or less of their EILA credit hours were directly related to their job as a school counselor. For example, one school counselor commented:

The majority of my professional development is in relation to non-counselor duties such as ARC training and building assessment training. I would love the opportunity to attend more counseling related development opportunities, but it is very hard to be out of my building when I am in charge of so many special education meetings and assessments.

Recommendation 2.4

Recommendation 2.4

School districts, with support and guidance from the Kentucky Department of Education, should comply with 704 KAR 3:325 and ensure that school counselors are getting at least 21 hours of training each year related to their job duties as a school counselor.

Counselors Needed To Meet Senate Bill 1 And Cost

Kentucky will need to hire an additional 1,156 school counselors to meet the 250-to-1 student-to-counselor ratio. This would cost at least \$93 million annually.

KRS 158.4416 set a goal of having one school counselor for every 250 students. If that goal were to apply only to A1 schools, districts would need to hire an additional 1,156 FTE school counselors. Table 2.13 shows the cost of base salaries and fringe benefits required to hire that many counselors. The total cost would be approximately \$93 million.

Table 2.13
Estimated Cost To Reach
Ratio Of 250 Students Per School Counselor At A1 Schools
2019

Cost Factor	Yearly Cost	Total Cost
Average base salary	\$60,392.00	\$69,813,152
Administrative fee	99.36	114,860
Life insurance	12.00	13,872
State teachers retirement	9,727.42	11,244,898
Health insurance	10,222.08	11,816,724
Total cost		\$93,003,506

Note: Total is based on the average cost of hiring 1,156 school counselors at A1 schools in 2019. Base salary does not include extra duty pay or pay for extra days worked by school counselors. Health insurance was calculated using the non-tobacco-user rate, LivingWell Consumer Driven Health Plan for parent-plus.

Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

A total of 114 districts will need to hire more than double the number of school counselors they currently employ.

Figure 2.B shows a map of the percentage increase in school counselors each district will need to meet the goal of one counselor for every 250 students. There are four districts that will not have to hire any additional staff because they already meet the suggested goal. Seventy districts will need to hire 50 to 100 percent more school counselors, and 44 districts will need to hire over an additional 100 percent, more than doubling their current number of school counselors.

Current Trend In Retirement Eligibility And Graduating School Counselors

Each year approximately 132 school counselors retire, move into noncounseling positions, or leave public education in Kentucky.

Guidance counselors contribute to the Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) for their pension plans. Anyone paying into TRS who retires with 20 or more years of service receives health insurance until qualifying for Medicare. As shown in Table 2.14, a total of 720 (46 percent) school counselors have 20 or more years of service. Of these, 218 (14 percent) have 27 or more years of service and could retire now with full retirement benefits. By comparison, only 10 percent of classroom teachers could retire now with 27 or more years of service. Between school years 2017 and 2019, approximately 132 school counselors left school counseling each year.^f

**Table 2.14
Number Of School Counselors
With 20 Or More Years Of Service
School Year 2019**

Years Of Service	Number Of School Counselors	Percent
20	91	6%
21	84	5
22	70	4
23	63	4
24	67	4
25	67	4
26	60	4
27+	218	14
Total	720	46

Note: There were 1,556 school counselors in Kentucky in 2019. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Source: Staff analysis of data from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Approximately 264 candidates complete their school counseling degrees annually.

The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education reported that 264 individuals completed school counseling degrees in school year 2018. This number was similar to the 263 who completed degrees in school years 2016 and 2017. In addition, from 2016 to 2018 there were only three individuals who completed an alternative counselor certification program. In the 2020 school year, there were 40 school counselor job postings posted as of October 16, 2019, that were still unfilled.^g However, there are currently 557 candidates enrolled in a traditional counselor preparation program.¹⁴

^f This figure includes school counselors who likely retired; those who continued working in Kentucky public schools, but in a different position; and those who no longer worked in Kentucky public schools.

^g Jefferson County had 22 unfilled school counselor positions.

Superintendents reported having trouble recruiting and retaining school counselors.

The OEA survey asked superintendents if their districts were having difficulty recruiting or retaining school counselors. Of the superintendents who responded, only 12 reported that they had difficulty retaining counselors. There were 47 superintendents who responded that their district had difficulty recruiting counselors. Among the districts that reported difficulty recruiting counselors, 66 percent reported that they did not have enough candidates, while only 3 reported that location was a challenge. Some reported that while they currently do not have difficulty, they expected to have difficulty once their current counselor retires.

Appendix A

OEA-Administered Surveys

Superintendent School Counselor Survey

The Kentucky General Assembly's enacted Senate Bill 1 in March 2019 that directed that the Office of Education Accountability to conduct a study on the use of school guidance counselors' time.

This survey has an estimated completion time of 10 minutes. We recommend printing a copy of the survey to record school counselor time spent on each activity and then keying information into the survey.

We would appreciate your answers no later than April 25, 2019.

All communication, responses, and information obtained from this survey will be confidential. Any reference in our report to the the responses we receive from this survey will include only aggregate information or data and will not reference any one person, school, or school district.

If you need clarification about any of the questions on the survey, please contact Sabrina Cummins or Bart Liguori at the Office of Education Accountability by calling 502-564-8167 or by emailing sabrina.cummins@lrc.ky.gov or bart.liguori@lrc.ky.gov.

We appreciate your time and information.

School District Information

1. In which school district do you work?
2. Contact information of person filling out survey.
3. Please provide the number of full-time and part-time school counselors working in your district.
4. With the passage of SB1, is your district planning to hire more school counselors next year?

Yes
No

5. Has your district experienced any issues with recruiting school counselors?

Yes (please explain if yes)
No

6. Has your district experienced any issues retaining school counselors?

Yes (please specify if yes)

No

Other Staff Members

7. Does your district employ or contract services for any of the following staff that may perform duties that allow school counselors to spend more time engaging in direct services to students?

School psychologist	No	Yes
School social worker	No	Yes
College and/or career coaches	No	Yes
Other qualified mental health professionals as defined in KRS 202A.011	No	Yes

If yes to any, please indicate the number of full-time equivalents (FTEs) for this position.

8. Do you have any additional comments regarding the amount of time a school counselor spends performing their duties?

School Counselor Survey

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We appreciate your time and information.

1. Are you currently employed as a school counselor (either part-time or full-time)?

Yes
No

School Information

2. In which school district do you work?
3. In which school(s) do you work?
4. How many years have you been employed as a school counselor in your current district?
5. How many total years have you been employed as a school counselor?
6. In what type of school do you work (please check all that apply)?

A1: A school under administrative control of a principal or head teacher and eligible to establish a school-based decision making council. An A1 school is not a program operated by, or as a part of, another school.

A2: District-operated career and technical education center (CTC), where the membership is counted in an A1 school.

A3: District-operated special education program (all enrollments should be special education).

A5: An alternative program that is a district-operated facility with no definable attendance boundaries that is designed to remediate academic performance, improve behavior, or provide an enhanced learning experience.

A6: KECSAC funded programs serving children in the custody of the state.

Other – please specify

7. With what grade range do you work (please check all that apply)?

Elementary school (P – 5)
Middle school (6 – 8)
High school (9 – 12)
Other – please specify

8. Are you currently serving as a full-time or part-time counselor?

Full-time

Part-time

9. Are you currently certified as a school counselor through Kentucky's Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB)?

Yes

No, but I am currently working toward earning my certification as a school counselor

No

10. Please provide the number of full-time and part-time school counselors working in your school.

Full-time

Part-time

11. How were your students assigned to you in school year 2018-2019?

I am the only counselor at my school

Counselors are assigned to a specific grade level (e.g., a 9th grade counselor)

Counselors are assigned to an incoming class of students and remain with them while they attend that school (e.g., a counselor for the class of 2019)

Counselors are assigned to a group of students whose last names fall within a portion of the alphabet (e.g., all students with the last names from "A to M")

Counselors are assigned to students based on responsibilities (e.g., assisting students with college readiness, selection, and application vs. assisting students with preparation for placement in the workforce)

Other – please specify

12. On average, how many students are assigned to you each year?

How You Spend Your Time

13. In your current role as a school counselor, what percentage of your time in a school year is used to provide the following services to your school? Please note: figures must sum to 100.

Academic counseling, which includes choice and scheduling of courses, postsecondary education admissions and selections, occupational choice, career planning, and development of Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs)

Providing counseling services to students that may include mental health counseling (one-on-one or in small or large groups), providing crisis response support and assistance to student and families, and communicating with families

Assisting students with special needs (including Admissions and Release Committee meetings and Section 504 meetings)

Student personal/social development and classroom instruction focusing on the importance of academics, applying to college, making healthy decisions, drug awareness, tobacco use, suicide prevention, etc.

Providing teachers with suggestions for effective classroom management and collaborating with teachers to present school counseling core curriculum lessons

Professional development for you related to school counseling

Counseling students with attendance, discipline and other school personal problems

Performing disciplinary actions or assigning disciplinary consequences to students

Administering tests such as K-PREP, MAP, etc.

Maintaining student records (entering enrollment/attendance information of students, etc.)

Non-counseling duties such as bus or lunch duty, dealing with sick children, substitute teaching, or event planning, etc.

School administrative duties such as covering for a principal who is out of the school building

Other counseling duties not mentioned above (enter percentage here, enter specific duties in question 14)

Other non-counseling duties not mentioned above (enter percentage here, enter specific duties in question 15)

14. Enter here the other counseling duties not mentioned in question 13?
15. Enter here the other non-counseling duties not mentioned in question 13?
16. Do you have any other comments about the amount of time spent performing a school counselor's duties?
17. In the 2018-2019 school year, how many hours of professional development did/will you receive that are directly related to school counseling?

Demographic Information

18. What is your race? Please check all that apply.

American Indian or Alaska Native

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

Asian

White

Black or African American

Prefer not to answer

Other (please specify)

19. What is your gender?

Male

Female

Prefer not to answer

Prefer not to self-describe

Appendix B

Number Of School Counselors Reported In Professional Staff Data Reports, Infinite Campus, And OEA Survey 2019

District	Infinite Campus	Professional Staff Data	OEA Survey
Adair County	5	5	—
Allen County	7	7	7
Anchorage Independent	1	1	1
Anderson County	9	8	8
Ashland Independent	9	9	—
Augusta Independent	1	1	1
Ballard County	3	3	3
Barbourville Independent	2	1	1
Bardstown Independent	4	3	4
Barren County	14	14	14
Bath County	5	5	5
Beechwood Independent	5	5	—
Bell County	7	7	7
Bellevue Independent	2	2	2
Berea Independent	3	3	—
Boone County	52	48	45
Bourbon County	7	7	—
Bowling Green Independent	12	12	—
Boyd County	10	8	7
Boyle County	9	7	8
Bracken County	3	3	3
Breathitt County	3	3	4
Breckinridge County	8	8	8
Bullitt County	30	27	30
Burgin Independent	1	2	2
Butler County	6	6	—
Caldwell County	5	5	5
Calloway County	10	7	7
Campbell County	23	21	22
Campbellsville Independent	3	3	3
Carlisle County	2	2	3
Carroll County	5	4	4
Carter County	11	11	10
Casey County	6	6	6
Caverna Independent	1	1	1
Christian County	23	23	23
Clark County	12	13	—
Clay County	3	2	—
Clinton County	5	5	4
Cloverport Independent	1	1	1
Corbin Independent	6	5	10
Covington Independent	12	11	—
Crittenden County	3	3	3
Cumberland County	2	3	3

District	Infinite Campus	Professional Staff Data	OEA Survey
Danville Independent	6	4	5
Daviess County	28	25	26
Dawson Springs Independent	1	1	1
Dayton Independent	4	2	2
East Bernstadt Independent	0	0	0
Edmonson County	6	6	6
Elizabethtown Independent	5	5	5
Elliott County	1	0	1
Eminence Independent	1	2	2
Erlanger-Elsmere Independent	11	10	10
Estill County	7	5	—
Fairview Independent	1	1	—
Fayette County	117	75	—
Fleming County	5	5	5
Floyd County	7	6	6
Fort Thomas Independent	8	7	9
Frankfort Independent	4	3	6
Franklin County	15	13	15
Fulton County	0	0	0
Fulton Independent	1	0	1
Gallatin County	4	4	4
Garrard County	2	3	3
Glasgow Independent	5	6	5
Grant County	9	9	9
Graves County	10	10	10
Grayson County	9	9	9
Green County	2	2	4
Greenup County	8	8	8
Hancock County	4	4	4
Hardin County	35	35	33
Harlan County	9	9	10
Harlan Independent	4	2	3
Harrison County	6	3	7
Hart County	7	7	7
Hazard Independent	3	3	3
Henderson County	21	20	—
Henry County	4	5	6
Hickman County	2	2	2
Hopkins County	20	18	14
Jackson County	4	4	5
Jackson Independent	0	0	—
Jefferson County	320	261	259
Jenkins Independent	1	1	1
Jessamine County	13	11	20
Johnson County	7	8	—
Kenton County	25	24	22
Knott County	2	3	1
Knox County	12	9	—
LaRue County	4	5	4
Laurel County	18	18	—
Lawrence County	7	7	—
Lee County	3	3	3

District	Infinite Campus	Professional Staff Data	OEA Survey
Leslie County	3	4	4
Letcher County	6	6	6
Lewis County	5	7	7
Lincoln County	9	8	8
Livingston County	2	2	3
Logan County	8	7	8
Ludlow Independent	1	0	2
Lyon County	3	3	3
Madison County	25	22	24
Magoffin County	6	6	—
Marion County	9	8	8
Marshall County	14	14	15
Martin County	7	7	—
Mason County	6	6	6
Mayfield Independent	6	4	3
McCracken County	18	17	—
McCreary County	5	3	—
McLean County	3	3	3
Meade County	9	10	11
Menifee County	3	3	3
Mercer County	7	5	6
Metcalfe County	5	5	5
Middlesboro Independent	3	3	3
Monroe County	4	3	4
Montgomery County	9	9	9
Morgan County	2	2	2
Muhlenberg County	13	12	11
Murray Independent	5	5	4
Nelson County	13	10	11
Newport Independent	4	4	4
Nicholas County	2	2	2
Ohio County	6	5	—
Oldham County	31	31	32
Owen County	3	3	4
Owensboro Independent	16	10	16
Owsley County	1	1	4
Paducah Independent	11	9	7
Paintsville Independent	2	2	2
Paris Independent	1	2	2
Pendleton County	4	4	4
Perry County	2	2	—
Pike County	15	15	—
Pikeville Independent	2	2	2
Pineville Independent	0	1	—
Powell County	6	5	6
Pulaski County	21	15	18
Raceland-Worthington Independent	2	2	2
Robertson County	1	1	1
Rockcastle County	7	6	6
Rowan County	8	7	7
Russell County	7	5	6
Russell Independent	6	5	—

District	Infinite Campus	Professional Staff Data	OEA Survey
Russellville Independent	2	2	2
Science Hill Independent	1	1	—
Scott County	21	18	18
Shelby County	16	14	18
Silver Grove Independent	1	1	1
Simpson County	8	5	5
Somerset Independent	4	4	3
Southgate Independent	1	1	—
Spencer County	4	4	5
Taylor County	5	5	5
Todd County	4	4	3
Trigg County	6	6	9
Trimble County	3	3	3
Union County	7	5	6
Walton-Verona Independent	3	3	3
Warren County	36	32	32
Washington County	3	4	4
Wayne County	5	6	6
Webster County	3	3	6
West Point Independent	0	0	0
Whitley County	3	4	3
Williamsburg Independent	2	2	2
Williamstown Independent	3	2	2
Wolfe County	4	3	3
Woodford County	12	10	10
Total for respondents	1,352	1,210	1,264
Total for nonrespondents	331	279	N/A
State total	1,683	1,489	N/A

Note: — = no response.

Source: Kentucky Department of Education and OEA superintendent school counselor survey.

Appendix C

Ratios Of Students To School Counselors In Schools With Multiple Levels 2019

Table C.1
Number Of Full-Time Equivalent School Counselors By School Type
School Year 2019

Level Of School	Number Of Students	Number Of FTE Counselors	Number Of Students Per Counselor	Average Student Per Counselor Count By Type Of School
Elementary/middle	26,610	48.25	551.5	407.8
Middle/high	10,531	26.50	397.4	368.4
Elementary/middle/high	5,520	11.18	493.7	361.1

Source: Professional Staffing Data and Superintendent Annual Attendance Report.

Endnotes

- ¹ American School Counselor Association. *ASCA National Model: Executive Summary*. n.d. Web. Accessed Oct. 24, 2019.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ American School Counselor Association. *ASCA National Model: A Framework For School Counseling Programs*. n.d. Web. Accessed Oct. 24, 2019.
- ⁵ American School Counselor Association. *ASCA National Model: Executive Summary*. n.d. Web. Accessed Oct. 24, 2019.
- ⁶ Deanna Durrett, general counsel. Kentucky Dept. of Educ. “Pathway to Counselor Cert.” Email to Bart Liguori. Oct. 16, 2019.
- ⁷ American School Counselor Association. *State Certification Requirements*. n.d. Web. Accessed Oct. 25, 2019.
- ⁸ Amanda Fitzgerald, dir. of public policy. American School Counselor Association. Email to Bart Liguori. Oct. 25, 2019.
- ⁹ Amanda Fitzgerald, dir. of public policy. American School Counselor Association. Email to Bart Liguori. Oct. 26, 2019.
- ¹⁰ American School Counselor Association. *ASCA National Model: Executive Summary*. n.d. Web. Accessed Oct. 24, 2019.
- ¹¹ Aaron Mudd. “GRREC Gears Up To Launch \$4 Million Mental Health Grant Project.” bgdailynews.com. Oct. 5, 2019. Web. Accessed Oct. 28, 2019.
- ¹² Kentucky Department of Education. *Use Of Individuals With Disabilities Education Act Funds (IDEA)*. n.d. Web. Accessed Oct. 26, 2019.
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- ¹⁴ Cassie Trueblood, Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness. Kentucky Dept. of Educ. “School Counselor Study.” Email to Sabrina Cummins. Oct. 29, 2019.

