Forward March: Implementing the ASCA National Model

to Support Military-Connected Students

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Abstract

This article outlines the challenges that military-connected students face and discusses ways in which school counselors may utilize each of the four components of the ASCA National Model to help this population. Finally, a case study is presented to demonstrate how school counselors may support military-connected students. Utilizing the ASCA model is especially important when working with military-connected students, who may have needs that are unfamiliar to many school counselors.

Keywords: school counselor, ASCA, military-connected students, education, culture

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A U.S. Department of Defense Demographics Report (2018) estimates that there are approximately 1.65 million military-connected youth. Out of 1.65 million military-connected youth, just under one million are school-aged (U.S. Department of Defense, 2018b). Eighty percent of the school-aged military-connected youth attended civilian schools (U.S. Department of Defense, 2018a). Despite these high numbers, the professional literature asserts that civilian educators, including school counselors, are unfamiliar and unequipped to support military-connected students (Chandra et al., 2010; Cole, 2018; Ruff & Keim, 2014).

Because of this unfamiliarity with the military population, school counselors should apply the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) National Model in their work with military families, as it encourages the use of a comprehensive and developmental program that endeavors to address the needs of all students (ASCA, 2019b). Consequently, the ASCA National Model may assist school counselors to meet military-connected students' unique needs as a part of their work to deliver a comprehensive school counseling program.

This article will provide an overview of the ASCA National Model and a summary of the many challenges that military-connected students face. Additionally, the article will include a discussion of how school counselors can apply specific components of the ASCA National Model to their work with military-connected students. Finally, a brief case will be presented as an example of ways in which school counselors may apply this model to their work with military-connected students in their schools.

ASCA National Model

The ASCA National Model (2019b) provides a framework for school counselors to develop and deliver a school counseling program that is "comprehensive in scope, preventative in design, and developmental in nature" (ASCA, 2012, p. xii). With the themes of leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change deeply engrained within the model, school counselors may work toward closing the achievement gap by ensuring that all students have equity and access to a rigorous education. The ASCA National Model is composed of four components: deliver, manage, deliver, and assess.

The define component is the foundation of the comprehensive school counseling program and consists of student and professional standards (ASCA, 2019b). The manage component allows school counselors to systemically monitor and track data to assess the needs of the program (ASCA, 2019b). The deliver component includes the services and activities that school counselors provide to stakeholders including students, parents, staff, and the community. Services are organized into two areas: direct and indirect (ASCA, 2019b). Direct services are defined as "in-person interactions between school counselors and students" (ASCA, 2019b, pg. 77). Indirect services are provided on behalf of students as a result of the school counselors' interactions with others. Assess, the final component of the ASCA National Model, guides school counselors to analyze school and program data that assists them in answering the question, "How are students different because of what school counselors do?" Assess measures the effectiveness and impact of the comprehensive school counseling program and communicates the results to stakeholders (ASCA, 2019b).

Understanding Military Culture

As culturally competent practitioners, school counselors are called to support the academic, social/emotional, and career readiness needs of all students (ASCA, 2016a). Educators and counselors are often unfamiliar with military culture and may be unprepared to address the needs that come with the distinct lifestyle of military families (Cole, 2018). Because the military may be viewed as a culture within a culture, specific factors such branch, status, job, rank, years of service, and even language play an important role as to how military service members and their families organize their world (Cole, 2014). With the complex layers that often come with understanding military culture, it is imperative that civilian educators and especially school counselors, are equipped with the tools necessary to support this unique population (ASCA, 2015).

Transitions

One unique challenge that separates military from civilian families is constant transition (Hall, 2008). Military families experience frequent transition, which may directly impact several aspects of their lives (Ruff & Keim, 2014). These families may be faced with deployments, relocation, and/or separation throughout the span of a service member's military career (Cole, 2018; De Pedro et al., 2018). In supporting military populations, it is imperative that school counselors are knowledgeable of these transitions as they seek to understand how students from military families may be impacted by these changes (ASCA, 2016).

Deployment

Deployment is defined as any movement of service members from their home installation to a location outside of the continental United States and its territories for the

purpose of combat, restoration of peace, increased security, humanitarian efforts, or evacuation of U.S. citizens (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). Deployment lengths vary in duration and multiple deployments are not uncommon (De Pedro et al., 2018). During this time, service members are separated from family and friends (Cole, 2012).

Relocation

For military families, a relocation, or permanent change of station (PCS) may be a consistent part of a service member's career (Hall, 2008). More than 400,000 service members receive PCS orders annually and unlike temporary assignments, PCS moves are long-term, typically requiring a service member and his or her family to spend two to four years at the assigned duty station (Military OneSource, 2020). Typically, military-connected students may change schools 6-9 times throughout their K-12 educational experience, which is approximately three times more than civilian students (Ruff & Keim, 2014).

Separation

Separating from military service may occur for several reasons—completing an enlistment term, retirement, and even medical discharges (Military OneSource, 2020). When a service member leaves the military, transitioning back into the civilian world may be challenging (Cole, 2018). Unlike civilian careers, military culture often determines how service members and their families live and make sense of the world around them (Cole, 2014). As service members navigate and readjust to repeated change, children and adolescents may also be affected by these transitions, especially as it concerns educational achievement (Cole, 2018).

Educational Impact on Military-Connected Students

For students from military families, deployment, PCS, and military separation create a constant "new normal" as they transition from one experience to another. These changes may cause a significant effect on the student's educational success (Cole, 2018). School counselors are responsible for supporting the academic, social/emotional, and career development needs of all students (ASCA, 2016a). In supporting students from military students, school counselors should be aware of the specific challenges in which they face within three areas: academic achievement, social/emotional development, and career readiness (ASCA, 2019b).

Academic Achievement

Military transitions may impact a student's academic success in several ways. For example, when military-connected families move from one duty station to another and students attend new schools, there is sometimes an issue of slow transfer of records (Sherman & Glenn, 2011). Without records, the new school may struggle to fully identify the student's academic background and needs (Berg, 2008). Military-connected students may also have to adjust to new school expectations, requirements, and curriculum (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Given that military-connected students may transition between schools as many as six-to-nine times within their educational careers, inconsistent academic standards across settings may create academic gaps, placing these students at an educational disadvantage when compared to their civilian peers (Ruff & Keim, 2014).

Social/Emotional Development

The experiences of military-connected students are often compared to that of *third culture kids*, or individuals who have spent a great deal of their developmental years outside of their parents' culture due to their parents' mobility and career placements (Limberg & Lambie, 2011). When moving from one place to another, individuals—including military-connected students—may experience a sense of grief or loss as it relates to interpersonal connections and their environment (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Students from military-connected families have no control in decisions regarding relocation, and consequently may they experience issues related to a lack of safety and trust (Gilbert, 2008). Additional stressors including culture shock, distorted sense of belonging, and changes in parents' work schedule may have a negative impact on the social/emotional development of military-connected students (Cole, 2018).

There are also emotional concerns that come with deployments (Cole, 2012). Because this type of transition may involve unknown circumstances as it relates to the service member's life and well-being, it is common for deployment periods to be filled with anxiety and sadness from those who are left behind (De Pedro et al., 2018; Limberg & Lambie, 2011). In addition to parental separation, emotional concerns during deployments may increase due to new family roles and responsibilities, reading about or hearing reports about combat or war in the media, and exposure to combat-related activities and equipment (Sanders, 2019).

Additionally, separation from the military and becoming a civilian may also bring about emotional challenges (Cole, 2018). In readjusting to civilian life and navigating a "new normal," military separation may bring about unanticipated challenges for both the

veteran and his or her family. Many veterans face high rates of unemployment, physical and mental health challenges, and overall frustration as they prepare to leave the military (Cole, 2018). These stressors may also extend to the military-connected student, as anxiety may arise about the future (Limberg & Lambie, 2011).

Career Readiness

Repeated transitions between schools may create academic gaps, which may impact career development in students (Ruff & Keim, 2014). Because academic standards change from one state to another, there may be inconsistency in acquiring foundational skills necessary to access more rigorous and complex content (Bradshaw et al., 2010). For military-connected students, experiencing learning deficits early on may create academic setbacks, which may increase as students continue transition from place to place (Ruff & Keim, 2014). It is possible that these academic challenges may lead to low school motivation, absenteeism, and increased dropout rates—factors that impact post-secondary success (ASCA, 2017b).

High school counselors are typically responsible for collaborating with students and families regarding post-secondary success through actions including assisting with college applications, preparing for SATs/ACTs, writing recommendation letters, providing financial aid workshops, administering career inventories, and collaborating in the completion of post-secondary actions plans (ASCA, 2017a). For military-connected students, college and career readiness counseling may be challenging due to frequent moves (Ruff & Keim, 2014). Additionally, high school students are often involved in school-sponsored clubs, sports, volunteer work, and other extracurricular activities (College Board, 2010). For military-connected students who transfer to another school

due to transition, there is no guarantee that similar extracurricular opportunities will be available within the new school (James, 2017). Because many factors influence college admissions decisions (e.g., including academic GPA, recommendations, extracurricular activities, and personal statements), career preparedness should be considered when supporting military-connected students (College Board, 2010).

Due to these many unique challenges that military families face as they experience deployments and constant transitions within and outside of the military, it is essential that school counselors are prepared to address their many needs. The following is a discussion of each of the components of the ASCA National Model and specific, concrete ways in which school counselors may implement each element of this model (define, manage, deliver, and assess), in their work with military-connected students.

Military-Connected Students and the Define Component

Relocations, deployments, and military separation may create major disruptions in the lives of military families and need to be addressed by school counselors as a part of their comprehensive school counseling programs. With military-connected students, these transitions may significantly impact their career, academic, and social/emotional development (Cole, 2018). When supporting all students through a comprehensive school counseling program, one of the first areas to consider is defining the program.

The define component of the ASCA National Model provides the base for developing, implementing, and assessing the comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2019b). When school counselors are in the early stages of developing their programs, they should utilize student and professional standards as guiding tools,

as these are key documents within the profession (ASCA, 2019b). The define component contains three sets of standards with which school counselors should be familiar: the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors (ASCA, 2014), the ASCA Professional Standards & Competencies (2019a), and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016).

In reviewing student standards, school counselors should consider how ASCA's Mindsets & Behaviors apply to military-connected students (ASCA, 2014). School counselors may utilize the mindsets & behaviors, for example, to assess student growth, guide counseling activities, and develop a program that addresses the academic, social/emotional, and career development needs of military-connected students (ASCA, 2019b). Additionally, school counselors should be knowledgeable of the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies (2019a) and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016) since these documents provide guidance to school counselors as they promote student success. In particular, understanding how to navigate ethical dilemmas such as confidentiality, cultural competence, referrals, and parents' rights are crucial when supporting military-connected students and families.

Military-Connected Students and the Manage Component

ASCA (2019b) states, "To effectively deliver the school counseling curriculum and address the developmental needs of every student, the school counseling program must be effectively and efficiently managed" (p.29). The manage component of the comprehensive school counseling program consists of two areas: program focus and program planning. Program focus includes the school counselor's beliefs along with the

program's mission and vision statements. Because the school counselor's beliefs directly impact how the school counseling program will contribute to student success, it is important for school counselors to view their program through a cultural lens (Villalba et al., 2007). School counselors should regularly examine their own belief systems, values, and biases regarding the military culture (ASCA, 2015) and consider how their program's mission, values, and goals for student outcomes are inclusive of the needs and challenges of military-connected students.

Program Focus

When developing and managing a school counseling program, the program focus should include belief statements that consider all students, including students from military families (ASCA, 2016a). School counselors should possess an understanding of how the program's mission and vision will connect to the needs of military-connected students and ensure that there are fair opportunities for them to achieve the program's goals (ASCA, 2019b). Program goals may be developed based on desired outcomes for military-connected students (ASCA, 2017c). These goals may include increased academic achievement, social/emotional development, career readiness, and school inclusivity.

Program Planning

The program planning portion of the manage component allows school counselors the opportunity to utilize various tools to organize and manage program data (ASCA, 2017c). School counselors may use program data and organizational instruments to support students from military families in a number of ways including progress monitoring, identifying barriers to student learning, and advocating for

resources to support military-connected students and their families (ASCA, 2019b). Program data and organizational tools may also be utilized to help advocate for the school counselor's role (ASCA, 2019b). For example, annual administrative conferences and use-of-time assessments may allow school counselors time to discuss, educate, and collaborate with school administrators about the specific needs of military-connected students along with appropriate data-driven school counseling activities to increase student success. Annual and weekly calendars may also help to keep school and community stakeholders informed regarding the services, events, and activities being offered through the comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2019b). The inclusion of important dates and events such as Memorial Day, Armed Forces Day, Veterans Day, and Month of the Military Child promotes awareness to the school community and a sense of belonging for military-connected students (James, 2017).

The advisory council is another key area of program planning and is comprised of both school and community stakeholders including students, parents, and members of the community (ASCA, 2019b). The role of the advisory council is to support the development and improvement of the comprehensive school counseling program through feedback and recommendations (ASCA, 2019b). In supporting military-connected students, it is important for school counselors to collaborate and consult with a diverse advisory council to include the various perspectives of stakeholders that are useful in promoting student achievement (Villalba et al., 2007). Inviting a member on the advisory council who is military-connected (e.g., military spouse, service member, military-connected student, veteran) allows for the exchange of beneficial information and resources that may support students from military families.

School counselors may be presented with challenges in managing and organizing data as it relates to military-connected students. Military-connected students whose parent/s or guardian/s are active duty are often transient due to the number of relocations within their service member's military career (Cole, 2018). Frequent moves may also make it difficult for schools to acquire important educational information for incoming military-connected students, especially when the student has attended several schools (Ruff & Keim. 2014). For school counselors, obtaining academic, behavioral, and attendance data for incoming students is essential, as this helps to identify the specific strengths and needs of the student (ASCA, 2019b). Needs assessments may be helpful in collecting data from military-connected students and their families, especially because they may assist school counselors in developing effective action plans and interventions (Sculli, 2011).

Additionally, school counselors should also ensure that military families are equipped with student information and data when they relocate to another duty station. This can be done with the development of a PCS binder or portfolio (Cole, 2018; Jones, 2019). These binders may include documentation such as school contact information, report cards or progress reports, individualized education programs, disability information relevant to the Americans with Disabilities Act (i.e., 504 plans), vaccination and medical records (for ongoing health concerns), proof of residency (military orders), and other important information that may be necessary for students who change schools frequently (Jones, 2019). A PCS binder may be an efficient way to support military families in the school enrollment process when transitioning to a new school. Creating a PCS binder may serve to connect the future and former school counselor in

helping the student and may help to reduce stress in obtaining and managing student data.

Military-Connected Students and the Deliver Component

Direct Services

School counselors provide direct services to students to address their immediate needs (ASCA, 2017c). These services include a range of approaches such as instruction, group counseling, and individual counseling. Because students from military-connected families face unique challenges when compared to their civilian peers, school counselors should intentionally select specific interventions and programs to support their unique needs (Cole, 2018).

Instruction

Classroom lessons, activities, and units may be utilized as universal interventions that allow school counselors to support all students (Dack & Merlin-Knoblich, 2019). School counselor-facilitated classroom lessons focus on academic, social/emotional, and career development (ASCA, 2019b). In developing classroom lessons, Sears (2004) suggests that school counselors should first identify the target population, assess the needs of students, and create measurable objectives that are connected to those student needs. In developing classroom lessons inclusive of students from military families, school counselors may create lessons that reflect the diversity of the school's population (ASCA, 2015). This may allow students to explore the value of others who identify differently. Additionally, school counselors may utilize different teaching approaches that appeal to the varying learning styles of students—such as integrating technology, co-teaching, and service-learning projects—as a way to increase

student engagement and understanding (Tomlinson, 2014). In reflecting on the specific challenges of students from military families, the school counselor should aim to meet lesson objectives that directly address these concerns (ASCA, 2019b).

Group Counseling

Group counseling allows students a shared experience of support, interpersonal development, and social-emotional growth in schools (ASCA, 2014). School counselors are trained to facilitate both psychoeducational and counseling groups within their training programs, typically through didactic and experiential approaches (ASCA, 2019a). Specifically, group counseling gives military-connected students a safe space to build interpersonal connections with other students, especially those who may be struggling with a transitional experience (Ruff & Keim, 2014). For example, military-connected students who are faced with relocating from one military installation to another may deal with loss of peer relationships and established routines (James, 2017). Facilitating groups that focus on school adjustment and well-being may support military-connected students through school transitional periods and encourage them to establish new peer networks (Ruff & Keim, 2014). For students from military families whose parent is being deployed, deployment groups that utilize biblio-counseling allows group members to "verbalize their feelings, gain a sense of normalcy, share their experiences, and find commonality with one another" (Cole, 2018, p.37). Biblio-counseling in groups may promote universality as well, as it allows students to see themselves within the characters in military-specific books that are facing similar concerns and make connections amongst each other (Villalba et al., 2007). Additionally, school counselors may suggest group activities for military-connected students such as

school-sponsored clubs, extracurricular activities, and volunteer opportunities within the community. These sorts of groups may result in increased and consistent positive social relationships and support (Cole, 2018).

Individual Counseling

For students whose needs may not be met through instruction or group counseling, school counselors may opt to provide individual counseling (ASCA, 2019b). Regarding students from military families, individual counseling may allow school counselors to focus on student strength and resiliency in overcoming transitional difficulties (Echterling et al., 2010). In some instances, military families may be unfamiliar with individual counseling services in schools. This coupled with the stigma that often comes along with counseling services and the military makes it crucial for school counselors to inform and educate military families on all aspects of the counseling relationship including confidentiality, informed consent, parents' rights, records, referrals, and the scope of the school counselor's role (ASCA, 2016a). Additionally, school counselors should demonstrate cultural sensitivity and possess knowledge of laws and policies that impact military families (ASCA, 2015).

In meeting with the individual student for the first time, the typical stages of the counseling process include: rapport building, assessment, intervention, evaluation, and termination. Additionally, the literature includes many counseling models that may effectively support military-connected students. Some examples of theories and interventions include reality therapy, ecological systems, play therapy, journaling, and expressive arts-based interventions (Acuri Sanders, 2019; Cole, 2018; Echterling et al., 2010; Wood et al., 2012). Through individual counseling, school counselors provide

students from military families the emotional support and encouragement that contributes to their overall social-emotional well-being and educational success (De Pedro et al., 2018).

Indirect Services

School counselors deliver indirect services on behalf of students. Indirect services include collaboration and consultation with stakeholders. Additionally, indirect services may include referrals to school and community-based agencies and organizations when the students' needs require support beyond the school counselor's scope of practice (ASCA, 2019b). Stakeholders may consist of parents, teachers, administrators, community members and service providers (ASCA, 2019b). Bryan & Henry (2012) assert that school-family-community partnerships are essential in increasing the academic, social/emotional, and career readiness outcomes of students. Because school counselors serve on several teams and committees to advocate for students' needs, including military-connected students, these partnerships are critical to their educational success (ASCA, 2019b).

Professional Development

According to ASCA (2016a), professional development is an ethical and professional responsibility for school counselors. Cole (2014) mentions that ongoing education for school counselors related to military culture may consist of workshops, webinars, and seminars. Along with the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), school counselors may obtain educational resources from the National Military Family Association or Military Families United (Cole, 2014). Furthermore, school counselors should remain aware of current literature and evidence-based practices in supporting military-

connected students (ASCA, 2016a). This allows school counselors to ensure that they are utilizing resources and interventions that are appropriate in addressing the needs of military-connected students and their families.

Military Student Identifier (MSI)

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) recognizes military-connected students as a subgroup and requires schools to include an MSI question within their student enrollment process (Military Child Education Coalition, 2012). Although parents are not obligated to answer this question, the MSI may assist in enhancing individualized academic, career, and social/emotional intervention efforts for students who are military-connected. School counselors may assist in obtaining this information by collaborating with the school's registrar, parents, and classroom teachers (ASCA, 2019b). In obtaining MSI information, school counselors are able to better disaggregate data and identify gaps and inequalities that impacts military-connected students (ASCA, 2019b).

Advocacy

School counselors may access resources related to military installations in order to better support military-connected students (James, 2017). The primary point of contact for school-related matters on a military installation is the school liaison officer (SLO) (Branch, MPTAC, 2020). SLOs assist military families with school concerns, coordinate with local school systems, and facilitate partnerships between the military and the school (MCEC, 2012). School counselors may consult with SLOs on military-related matters that impact education, collaborate on special school and community-wide programs /events, and work with parents in locating resources (James, 2017).

The Family Advocacy Program (FAP) is another resource that may support military-connected students and their families (Military OneSource, 2019). FAP is "designated to address domestic abuse, child abuse and neglect, and problematic sexual behavior in youth" (Military OneSource, 2019, para. 1). FAP offers resources such as parent support, victim advocacy, and counseling. For student concerns related to neglect, abuse, and domestic violence that are outside the school counselor's scope, school counselors may refer to FAP to ensure that military-connected families receive support to address their unique needs (ASCA, 2016a).

The Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) provides support for military-connected family members with medical or educational needs. When families enroll in EFMP, the program ensures that the family members' needs are documented and considered during a PCS (James, 2017). Additionally, EFMP provides information for military and community services, informs parents of local schools and early intervention programs, and assists families in finding programs in new locations (MCEC, 2012). School counselors can support military-connected students with disabilities and their families by ensuring that EFMP-related information is readily available, and parents have the opportunity to connect with an EFMP point of contact if they choose to enroll in the program (MCEC, 2012). Providing military-connected families with information on EFMP is especially important when students are found eligible for special education or 504 services or when there is a change of educational supports/programming for students with disabilities (ASCA, 2016b).

Finally, Child & Youth Services (CYS) program, sponsored by the military, provides affordable childcare programs for military families (James, 2017). These

programs include aftercare, weekend programs, supplemental academic support, and community partnerships (Military OneSource, 2018). For military-connected families who are seeking to obtain support in any of these areas, school counselors may serve as the bridge to connect families to these resources (ASCA, 2016a).

Military-Inclusive School Climate

A military-inclusive school climate helps to promote school connectedness and establish a sense of belonging for military-connected students (James, 2017). Because many military-connected students face various transitions throughout their school career, they may experience social and emotional concerns at a higher rate than their civilian counterparts (Clever & Segal, 2013). A safe, caring, and supportive school environment may have protective factors as they relate to the well-being of military-connected students (De Pedro et al., 2018).

School counselors may promote a military-inclusive school climate in a number of ways. Since educators are often unfamiliar with military culture and may not be adequately prepared to address the needs of military-connected students (Cole, 2018), school counselors may help increase the cultural competence of faculty and staff through professional development focused on military culture (ASCA, 2015). School counselors may invite military support organizations to facilitate presentations and workshops for school stakeholders (Cole, 2018). The Military Child Education Coalition offers both traditional and online courses for educators to enhance their skills and awareness in this area (MCEC, 2020). A military installation's SLO and other military organizations may also provide educational opportunities to schools regarding military culture (James, 2017). Parent involvement is also another way to build partnerships and

promote a military-inclusive school climate (Cole, 2014). Military-connected families may sometimes feel invisible in civilian schools (Hanna, 2018). Encouraging parent presence through *meet and greet* events, parent workshops, volunteering, community integration, participating in parent teacher organizations and other school efforts fosters a sense of purpose, connectedness, and visibility for parents of military-connected students (Wood et al., 2012). School counselors may encourage military-connected students to form clubs with others to build relationships, develop shared ownership, and promote safety (James, 2017). These clubs may also help promote a sense of pride and belonging and provide an opportunity for students—both military-connected and civilian—to learn from one another (Wood et al., 2012). Finally, school-wide activities including assemblies and extracurricular activities may help foster school connectedness and assist in creating a safe haven for students experiencing distress due to military-related transitions (Chandra et al., 2010).

Military Connected Students and the Assess Component

The assess component defines activities that examine the effectiveness of the school counseling program and the counselor in their effort to promote success (Isaacs, 2003). Data collected from tools such as the school counselor performance appraisal, program assessment, and results reports should be analyzed. The results are then shared among school stakeholders. It also allows school counselors and others to assess how military-connected students are different because of the comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2019b). Because the assess component includes the analysis of program data to determine whether program goals were met, it is

essential for school counselors to establish and maintain a strong and consistent

manage component (Dimmitt & Carey, 2007).

Case Study

The following case study provides an example of a school counselor who is

struggling to support military-connected students within her school. The challenges

described are similar to those that many school counselors face when supporting

military students and their families.

Patricia is school counselor (with 3 years of experience) who was recently hired

at an elementary school close to a military base. Within the first few weeks of working at

this new school, Patricia notices that many of her students are military-connected (with

a parent who is an active-duty service member). Several teachers have already referred

students to her because their parents have recently been deployed or they have

recently moved to the area and seem to be having trouble adjusting to the new school.

Although Patricia has utilized the ASCA National Model at her former school, she does

not have any experience in working with military-connected students and is worried that

she may not be able to adequately address their needs. Patricia is the only school

counselor in her building and is unsure of whom or where to obtain support.

Suggestions for Practice

School counselors who are faced with a similar dilemma should be

knowledgeable of ASCA's student and professional standards in meeting the needs of

this unique population (ASCA, 2019b). Becoming familiar with ASCA Mindsets &

Behaviors, Professional Standards and Competencies, and Ethical Standards guide

school counselors in developing, implementing, and assessing a school counseling

program. Next, it is critical to assess one's own belief systems and values about military culture and reflect on how the school counseling program incorporates the unique needs of military-connected students (ASCA, 2015). Developing a program mission and vision statement that parallels the schools and is inclusive of military-connected students would be beneficial to the comprehensive school program (ASCA, 2019b).

When managing program data that is inclusive of information related to students from military-connected families, it is critical for the school counselor to have the support of their administrator (De Pedro et al., 2014). Quite often civilian educators are unaware of the needs of military-connected students (Cole, 2018). Additionally, school administrators may not fully understand the role of the school counselor (De Pedro et al., 2014). During an initial meeting, preferably at the start of the school year, the school counselor may discuss the annual agreement and use of time assessment with the administrator to help set the tone of the school counselor's role and responsibility (ASCA, 2019b). Within this meeting, sharing the needs of military-connected students— along with accompanying academic, behavioral, and attendance data—allows the school counselor and administrator to collaborate on a plan of action and develop an annual/weekly calendar that is inclusive of military-connected students (ASCA, 2019b).

In addition to managing program data, direct services for military-connected students may include classroom lessons, group counseling, and individual counseling (ASCA, 2017c). When working with this specific population, the school counselor should view every student and situation uniquely and not assume that all military-connected students struggle with the same concern (ASCA, 2016a). Because classroom lessons are extended to all students within a school, the school counselor may facilitate

psychoeducational lessons that will allow students to develop an awareness of mental health and coping skills (ASCA, 2015b). For military-connected students who may struggle with anxiety, classroom lessons may be an effective prevention and intervention tool in decreasing these symptoms (Thompson et. al, 2013). In addition, when facilitating group counseling sessions, the school counselor may lead friendship or new student groups to encourage positive peer relationships between military-connected and civilian students (James, 2017).

Individualized support through one-on-one counseling allows the school counselor to review unique factors including family background, educational history, health needs, academic issues, career aspirations, and social-emotional concerns (ASCA, 2015). Upon obtaining this information, the school counselor may then collaborate with the military-connected student's parents to develop tailored interventions to address specific concerns (ASCA, 2019b). In addition to this direct support, school counselors may engage in indirect services through professional development that is specific to military-connected students and their culture (ASCA, 2019b).

One way in which the school counselor demonstrates the effectiveness of their program for students from military families is by collecting outcome evaluation data to measure the impact of an intervention (Dimmitt, 2009). For example, the school counselor might demonstrate how school counseling interventions have helped to enhance the military-connected students' social/emotional development. As a result, students may develop positive and supportive peer relationships, demonstrate social maturity and behaviors appropriate to the situation and environment, and use effective

communication skills. The school counselor may consider facilitating individual counseling sessions to improve coping skills for military-connected students with social/emotional concerns (ASCA, 2017c). Prior to the initial session, the school counselor may want to administer a pre-assessment to determine the student's coping skills. Then, throughout the duration of counseling, the school counselor should monitor progress by consulting with stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, administrators) (ASCA, 2019b). After the last session, the student may complete a post-assessment (using the same tool as the pre-assessment) to evaluate whether the intervention improved the student's coping skills. The school counselor may share the results with stakeholders and continue to monitor the student to determine if the individual intervention has been effective over time (ASCA, 2019b).

Summary

In Patricia's case, it is essential that school counselors support military-connected students through a comprehensive framework that addresses the distinct needs of this student population (ASCA, 2019b; ASCA, 2015). School counselors who are knowledgeable of challenges faced by military-connected students are better equipped to provide effective services (Cole, 2014). By becoming familiar with military family culture and focusing on the needs of military-connected students, school counselors may help these students succeed as their families serve, defend, and protect.

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