

## Fall 2009 Psychology Day Session: Working in a School Setting

### School Psychology

information from the National Association of School Psychologists: [www.nasponline.org/about\\_sp/careerfaq.aspx](http://www.nasponline.org/about_sp/careerfaq.aspx)

#### What do school psychologists do?

- Consult with teachers, parents, administrators and community mental health providers about learning, social and behavior problems;
- Engage in school-wide mental health activities;
- Assist educators in implementing safe, healthy classroom and school environments;
- Teach about parenting skills, problem solving strategies, substance abuse, and other topics pertinent to healthy schools;
- Conduct research about effective instruction, behavior management, alternative school programs and mental health interventions;
- Assess and evaluate the wide variety of school-related problems and assets of children and youth in assigned schools;
- Intervene directly with students and families through individual counseling, support groups and skills training;
- Serve as a member of interdisciplinary teams to address needs of at-risk students and to serve the needs of students with disabilities through the special education assessment, eligibility and placement process;
- Communicate results of psychological evaluations to parents, teachers and others so that they can understand the nature of the student's difficulties and how to better serve the student's needs;
- Engage in crisis prevention and intervention services;
- Work with a wide range of student emotional and academic issues;

#### Where do school psychologists work?

The majority (81%) of school psychologists work in public school settings. Other primary places of employment are private schools, community agencies, hospitals and clinics and universities.

#### What education is required?

The majority of states require the completion of a 60 graduate semester specialist-level program in school psychology including a 1200-hour internship. Many programs also offer a doctorate in school psychology, which generally requires 5-7 years of graduate work including a 1500-hour internship and completion of a dissertation. NASP maintains that the minimum acceptable education in school psychology is specialist-level training.

#### What is the difference between attending a *Specialist vs. Doctoral* training program?

Nearly all states certify school psychologists who have completed a 60 graduate semester specialist-level program in school psychology including a 1200-hour internship. A few states will only grant the title School Psychologist for those with a doctoral degree, and will have some other title for those with a Specialist level degree, such as School Psychological Service provider or School Psychology Specialist.

#### What is the difference between a school psychologist and a school counselor?

School psychology training brings together the knowledge base of several disciplines including child psychology and development and education with an emphasis on special education. In most states and most training programs, school counseling does not include training or work with special education populations. In addition, most states require three years of graduate school training including a 1200-hour internship to become a credentialed school psychologist. In comparison, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) indicates that accredited master's degree programs in school counseling include a minimum of 2 years of full-time study *including* 600 hours of supervised internship.

In the school setting, counselors typically work with the total school population regarding a variety of issues--family and academic problems, career planning, course schedules and problem solving around course selection and scheduling, etc. In some districts elementary counselors in particular conduct groups regarding family changes, social skills, etc. With older students they may also be involved in chemical dependency prevention and early intervention activities, crisis

intervention, mental health counseling, etc. School psychologists are typically funded through special education monies and often their first responsibility is to the population of students at risk for failure and who have identified disabilities. With these populations their roles include assessment (comprehensive evaluations of disability and risk), consultation regarding instructional and behavioral interventions, and direct interventions including crisis prevention/intervention, individual and group counseling and skill training. In this latter role school psychologists may overlap the duties of counselors and social workers, and often will work jointly with these other professionals such as co-leading social skills groups and jointly serving on crisis support teams.

## School Counseling

information from the website of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP): <http://www.cacrep.org/>

*Counseling.* The American Counseling Association ([www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org)) defines professional counseling as the application of mental health, psychological or human development principles through cognitive, affective, behavioral, or systemic intervention strategies that address wellness, personal growth or career development as well as pathology.

NYS requirements for School Counselor [PreK-12] certification:  
<http://eservices.nysed.gov/teach/certhelp/CertRequirementHelp.do>

According to the US Dept of Labor (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos067.htm>)

1. School counselors must be certified, and other counselors must be licensed to practice in all but two States. A master's degree generally is needed to become a licensed counselor.
2. Job opportunities for counselors should be very good because job openings are expected to exceed the number of graduates from counseling programs.
3. State and local governments employ about 4 in 10 counselors, and the health services industry employs most of the others.

## School Social Work

Information from the website of the School Social Work Association of America <http://www.sswaa.org>

**SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK** is a specialized area of practice within the broad field of the social work profession. School social workers bring unique knowledge and skills to the school system and the student services team. School Social Workers are instrumental in furthering the purpose of the schools: To provide a setting for teaching, learning, and for the attainment of competence and confidence. School social workers are hired by school districts to enhance the district's ability to meet its academic mission, especially where home, school and community collaboration is the key to achieving that mission.

**Role & Function** School Social Workers provide a vital link among the school, home and community. Most School Social Workers are involved in providing services to all students. Most provide direct services to students and their families including casework, group work and classroom presentations as well as providing crisis intervention and consultation and making referrals to community agencies. School Social Workers are part of the assessment process for special education students as well as often providing direct and indirect services to those students. School Social Workers consult with teachers and administrators and frequently participate on teams within the schools.

**Certification and Regulation** The regulation of school social work is a state educational issue. Certification requirements are developed by each state and vary accordingly. S.S.W.A.A. maintains a directory of state information. [www.sswaa.org](http://www.sswaa.org)

**Educational Requirements** The majority of School Social Workers hold a master's Degree in Social Work, which is the prescribed entry level in most states. Some states, however, do allow entry level at the bachelor's level.