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Thank you for your request for information on **counselors' level of responsibility and activity in rural, urban, and suburban schools**. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the 10 regional educational laboratories (REL) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. It provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations on research-based education questions.

Please note that REL Southwest has not done an evaluation of the resources themselves but offers this list to you for your information only.

BACKGROUND

More than two-thirds of Oklahoma school districts are classified as rural, giving the state one of the highest proportions of rural districts in the REL Southwest Region.¹ The state's rural schools face several challenges, including poverty, limited resources, and difficulty recruiting and training teachers. The Oklahoma Rural Schools Research Alliance examines factors that affect rural school performance and uses data to inform and improve practice and develop products tailored to rural schools. The following questions were converted to Ask A REL questions from the Oklahoma Rural School Research Alliance's research agenda.

Following an established REL Southwest protocol, we conducted a search for research reports as well as descriptive briefs on counselors' level of responsibility and activity in rural, urban, and suburban schools. The sources included federally funded organizations, additional research institutions, educational databases, and general Internet searches using Google and Bing. See the methods section at the end of this Ask A REL for additional information on how we identified the following sources.

QUESTION

How do counselors' level of responsibility and activity differ in rural, urban, and suburban schools?

¹ National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 2010-2011.

SOURCES

Demissie, Z. and Brener, N. (2017). Demographic differences in district-level policies related to school mental health and social services--United States. *Journal of School Health, 87*(4), 227-235. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1132371>.

From the ERIC abstract: “Background: Mental health conditions among youth are a major concern. Schools can play an important role in supporting students affected by these conditions. This study examined district-level school health policies related to mental health and social services to determine if they varied by district demographic characteristics. Methods: The School Health Policies and Practices Study (SHPPS) 2012 collected cross-sectional data on school health policies and practices from a nationally representative sample of public school districts (N = 684). We used logistic regression to examine the association between district-level demographic characteristics and school mental health policies. Results: Southern and low-affluence districts had higher odds of requiring schools to have a specified counselor-to-student ratio as compared with Northeastern and average affluence districts, respectively. Northeastern and urban districts had higher odds of requiring educational and credentialing requirements for school mental health or social services staff, compared to other regions and rural districts, respectively. Conclusions: Results describe the extent to which school mental health and social services programs in the United States are meeting various guidelines. More work is necessary to ensure that all schools have the resources needed to support their students' mental health and meet national guidelines, especially in districts with certain characteristics.”

Edwards, L. M. and Sullivan, A. L. (2014). School psychology in rural contexts: Ethical, professional, and legal issues. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 30*(3), 254-277. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1037662>.

From the ERIC abstract: “Delivering psychological services in rural communities presents a number of unique challenges for practitioners relative to their peers in urban and suburban communities. In this article, the authors describe the current context of rural schools and examine the ethical and legal issues school psychologists may face when practicing in rural educational settings. They link these issues to the field's ethical guidelines and educational policy and offer practical recommendations for resolving potential dilemmas. Implications for practice, training, and research are discussed.”

Goforth, A. N., Yosai, E. R., Brown, J. A., and Shindorf, Z. R. (2017). A multi-method inquiry of the practice and context of rural school psychology. *Contemporary School Psychology, 21*(1), 58-70. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1131630>.

From the ERIC abstract: “This multi-method inquiry used (1) quantitative examination of context, characteristics, roles, and responsibilities of rural school psychologists compared to their suburban and urban counterparts and (2) qualitative examination of two focus groups of rural school psychologists. Results showed that rural school psychologists served more schools, had fewer years of experience, and spent significantly more time traveling, yet they had similar access to a variety of interventions and professional development opportunities. Four emergent themes evolved out of the

focus groups: (1) advantages and disadvantages of the rural community and school size, (2) cultural challenges and disparities in rural schools, (3) professional issues, and (4) ethical issues of working in rural schools. Considerations and implications for practicing rural school psychologists are discussed. The provision of psychological services for children in rural communities is a significant challenge. Rural communities are diverse in many ways, including proximity to major metropolitan areas, population ethnicity, religiosity, and socioeconomic status (Beebe-Frankenberger and Goforth 2014). Children from rural communities are at an elevated risk for mental health problems compared to their urban counterparts, yet they have less access to mental health care (Moore et al. 2005). Commonly, people from small rural communities face barriers to mental health care that include driving great distances to nearby towns or cities, the inability to afford the high cost of mental health care, as well as facing or perpetuating stigma associated with mental health (Heflinger, Wallston, Mukolo, & Brannan, 2014). In addition, rural children underachieve academically compared to other children, scoring lower on reading and math proficiency tests compared to suburban children, and are less likely to enroll in college (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). School psychologists provide important services to this community to meet rural children's academic and social-emotional needs. Rural school psychologists, however, face a number of challenges that affect their ability to provide services. They may work in schools that are spread across hundreds of miles, which may decrease their ability to develop relationships with parents and children within those schools (Beebe-Frankenberger and Goforth 2014). Moreover, rural school psychologists have higher pupil-to-psychologist ratios compared to their urban counterparts, being responsible for an average of 1700 children (Hosp and Reschley 2002), suggesting that fewer children are receiving adequate social-emotional and academic support. The importance of school psychologists' role in helping children in rural communities is clear, yet there is surprisingly little recent research conducted on the school psychologists' specific roles and responsibilities in rural public schools. Previous surveys of rural school psychologists have suggested that the practice of rural school psychology has a unique set of challenges, such as limited support services and professional isolation (Clopton and Knesting 2006), while other research has suggested that there are few significant differences in the practice of rural school psychology (Reschly and Connolly 1990). Consequently, the purpose of this study is to provide an in-depth, multi-method inquiry of the practice and context of rural school psychology by comparing the roles and responsibilities of rural, suburban, and urban school psychologists."

Grimes, L. E., Haskins, N., and Paisley, P. O. (2014). "So I went there": A phenomenological study on the experiences of rural school counselor social justice advocates. *Professional School Counseling*, 17(1), 40-51.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1034663>.

From the ERIC abstract: "This phenomenological study explored the experiences of rural school counselors as social justice advocates. The first author interviewed seven participants in their respective communities and identified five themes, including both positive and negative elements: the stability of place, community promise, mutual reliance, professional and personal integration, and a focus on individuals. The authors include implications for practice and future research on the ways that rural school

counselors can use community resources to advocate for marginalized groups of students.”

Hanchon, T. A. and Fernald, L. N. (2013). The provision of counseling services among school psychologists: An exploration of training, current practices, and perceptions. *Psychology in the Schools*, 50(7), 651-671. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1014463>.

From the ERIC abstract: “Although school psychologists have been called on in recent literature to assume a leadership role in a collective and comprehensive effort to address students' mental health needs, many practitioners find that their professional roles continue to be narrowly focused on special education-related activities, such as individualized assessment and eligibility determination. Meanwhile, students' mental health needs have never been greater. The current study focused specifically on school psychologists' provision of school-based counseling, an activity that has been shown to be effective in addressing students' mental health needs, as well as a professional role that many practitioners have expressed a desire to expand. A national sample of school psychologists responded to an Internet survey related to various aspects of counseling service delivery, including their training to provide services, current practices, and perceptions of the importance for school psychologists to assume the responsibility of providing school-based counseling services. (Contains 9 tables.)”

Hann-Morrison, D. (2011). The varied roles of school counselors in rural settings. *Georgia School Counselors Association Journal*, 18(1), 26-33. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ963124>.

From the ERIC abstract: “In an effort to demonstrate the uniqueness of the school counselor's role in rural, as opposed to urban, communities, this contribution will speak to the societal norms that render rural communities cultural entities, in and of themselves. The discussion will start with a brief elucidation of the prescribed roles of the school counselor, before offering a broadened perspective of school counselors who practice in rural communities. This contribution will also consider characteristics of rural schools that may be either liabilities or assets in facilitating children's social and psychological growth.”

Marbley, A. F., Wimberly, C., Berg, R., Rouson, L., and Wilkins, E. (2011). Case studies of African American families: Self-reports of ethnically diverse practitioners. *Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, Vol. 19(2), 174-181. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ923174>.

From the ERIC abstract: “Using the lessons learned from mistakes made in their earlier clinical work with African American families, through the lens of Multicultural Counseling and Therapy theory, these culturally diverse practitioners use reflections from their counseling experiences to offer clinicians a people-responsive, diversity-sensitive framework and provide recommendations for working with African American families in school and community counseling settings.”

Robinson-Zanartu, C., Butler-Byrd, N., Cook-Morales, V., Dauphinais, P., Charley, E., and Bonner, M. (2011). School psychologists working with Native American youth: Training, competence, and needs. *Contemporary School Psychology*, 15, 103-115. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ934710>.

From the ERIC abstract: “Despite growing emphases on multicultural competence, Native American youth remain tremendously underserved by schools: low achievement, high dropout rates, and over-identification for special education persist. The authors analyzed responses of 403 school psychologists to a national survey regarding their competence gained in training, in current practice, and that needed for effective work with Native Americans. Respondents reported significant underpreparation in training and inadequate preparation for competent practice. Both ethnicity and length of experience with the population yielded significant differences in perceived levels of competence. (Contains 6 tables.)”

Vega, D., Lasser, J., and Plotts, C. (2015). Global migration: The need for culturally competent school psychologists. *School Psychology International*, 36(4), 358-374. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1069355>.

From the ERIC abstract: “Never before have more children lived away from their home countries. Given the unique social, emotional, and academic needs of children who have migrated, school psychologists must be well prepared to meet these growing demands. Consequently, school psychology training programs must invest in the preparation of culturally competent future school psychologists. In this article, we review relevant literature regarding children, migration, and school psychology and then describe a model training program that was developed to prepare school psychologists in Texas, where there are a significant number of migrant children from Mexico and South America. Broader implications for training school psychologist in the areas of cultural and linguistic diversity are discussed.”

ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES TO CONSULT

We also searched for appropriate organizations and resources that may be useful. We have not done an evaluation of these organizations or the resources themselves but offer this list for reference only.

American School Counselor Association - <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/>

From the website: “The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) supports school counselors' efforts to help students focus on academic, career and social/emotional development so they achieve success in school and are prepared to lead fulfilling lives as responsible members of society. ASCA provides professional development, publications and other resources, research and advocacy to professional school counselors around the globe.”

California Department of Education, Research on School Counseling Effectiveness - <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/rh/counseffective.asp>

From the website: “Provides a collection of sources that address the effectiveness of school counseling and other student support services, including their contribution to the personal and academic success of students.”

METHODS

Keywords and Search Strings Used in the Searches

School counselor, psychologist work, responsibility, and services, rural, suburban, city, urban

Search of Databases and Websites

- Institute of Education Sciences (IES) website (<http://www.ies.ed.gov>) and IES sources: Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Program, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Center for Education Research (NCER), What Works Clearinghouse (WWC)
- ERIC database (www.eric.ed.gov)
- Google Scholar (scholar.google.com)
- Google (www.google.com)
- Bing (www.bing.com)

Criteria for Inclusion

REL Southwest selected resources that provide research on counselors’ level of responsibility and activity in rural, urban, and suburban schools. When REL Southwest staff reviewed resources, we considered – among other things – three factors:

1. Date of Publication: The most current information (primarily published from 2011 to the present) is included.
2. Source and Funder of the Report/Brief/Article: Priority was given to publications written in relevant, peer-reviewed journals or reports or produced by well-known research organizations.
3. Methodology: sources include reported studies, literature reviews and policy reports.

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