

“13 Reasons Why” Netflix Series: How School Counselors Can Help

The teenage years are typically marked by turbulent emotions and stress. The Netflix series “13 Reasons Why” has highlighted the impact and consequences when friends, parents, teachers and school counselors aren’t aware of or don’t know how to intervene when a student needs help.

Often mental health struggles come to light only in the public extremes, when an outburst or tragic event or television show forces us to stop and ask “Why?” Because it is not a physical disability but one involving brain chemistry, mental illness is often a private struggle that hides in the corners of our school hallways.

Educating students, staff members and parents about mental health issues is critical to the work of school counselors. School counselors know students who struggle socially and emotionally are vulnerable to academic failure. Instinctively, others know this as well but often don’t have the tools they need or know school counselors can provide to help.

School counselors:

- Recognize warning signs, such as:
 - changes in school performance (e.g. grades, attendance)
 - changes in mood
 - complaints of illness
 - increased disciplinary problems at school
 - problems experienced at home or family situations (stress, trauma, divorce, substance abuse, poverty, domestic violence)
 - communication from teachers about problems at school
 - dealing with existing mental health concerns

- Educate teachers, administrators, parents/guardians and community stakeholders about the warning signs and about the mental health concerns of students, including recognition of the role environmental factors have in causing or exacerbating mental health issues and provide resources and information

- Advocate, collaborate and coordinate with school and community stakeholders to ensure students and their families have access to mental health services

- Recognize and address barriers to access mental health services and the associated stigma, including cultural and linguistic impediments

- Help identify and address students’ mental health issues while working within the [ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors](#); Competencies for School Counselors; and national, state and local legislation (FERPA and HIPPA), which guide school counselors’ informed decision making and standardize professional practice to protect both the student and school counselor

- Direct students and parents to school and/or community resources for additional assistance through referrals that treat mental health issues (suicidal ideation, violence, abuse and depression)

- Provide responsive services including internal and external referral procedures, short-term counseling or crisis intervention focused on mental health or situational (e.g. grief, difficult transitions) concerns with the intent of helping the student return to the classroom and removing barriers to learning
- Deliver the school counseling core curriculum that proactively enhances awareness of mental health; promotes positive, healthy behaviors; and seeks to remove the stigma associated with mental health issues
- Provide school-based prevention and universal interventions and targeted interventions for students with mental health and behavioral health concerns
- Provide students with individual planning addressing their academic, career and social/emotional (including mental health) needs
- Adhere to appropriate guidelines regarding confidentiality, the distinction between public and private information and consultation
- Seek to continually update their professional knowledge regarding the students' social/emotional needs

Additional Resources:

[The Role of the School Counselor](#)

ASCA Position Statement: [The School Counselor and Student Mental Health](#)

ASCA Position Statement: [The School Counselor and Trauma-Informed Practice](#)

[Lead Mental Health Efforts](#), *ASCA School Counselor* (2014)

[Suicide: Err on the Side of Caution](#), *ASCA School Counselor* (2013)

[Student Suicide: Legal and Ethical Implications](#), *ASCA School Counselor* (2012)

[Mental health surveillance among children – United States, 2005-2011](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2010).

Erickson, A., & Abel, N. R. (2013). [A high school counselor's leadership in providing schoolwide screenings for depression and enhancing suicide awareness](#). *Professional School Counseling*, 16(5), 283-289. doi: 10.5330/psc.n.2013-16.283

Coalition to Support Grieving Students:
<https://grievingstudents.org>

[Foundation for the Advancement of Alcohol Responsibility](#)

[National Sexual Violence Resource Center](#)

[The National Center for Victims of Crime](#)

[CDC Fact Sheet on Underage Drinking](#)