

**The School Counselor's Role in Alternative Education  
Programs in Virginia**

Darryl D. Helems

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APPROVED:

Dr. Thomas Hohenshil, Co-Chair

Dr. Jimmie Fortune, Co-Chair

Dr. David Hutchins

Dr. Claire Cole Curcio

Dr. Worth Bradley

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Darryl D.Helems

### **(Abstract)**

This study was developed to answer the research questions 1) What services do school counselors provide in alternative education programs in Virginia? and 2) What are the reasons that students are participating in alternative education programs in Virginia? Alternative programs throughout Virginia were identified and data were randomly collected from a random sample of administrators and school counselors working in 15 of these programs. The data collected were then transcribed and analyzed in an effort to determine if any significant categories or themes related to the research questions.

The data indicated that most counselors identified that they were involved in both direct counseling and administrative duties at their schools. Direct counseling duties consisted primarily of individual counseling, group counseling, and career counseling while the two primary administrative duties reported were test coordination and scheduling.

The data indicated some consistent reasons for placement in alternative education programs. Seven schools reported that they served students for behavioral, academic, and other various reasons while only three reported that they served students specifically for behavioral or academic reasons. The areas of discipline/expulsion, failing grades, lack of

credits to gain diploma, truancy, and teen pregnancy were identified as reasons for which placement in the alternative programs interviewed.

The results of this study suggested a need for further studies relating to community involvement and direct counseling activities of school counselors working in alternative education. Recommendations were also made with regards to the future training of school counselors and the development of alternative education programs.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

This study describes how school counselors who work in alternative education programs in Virginia define their roles and responsibilities. To assist in providing information in this area, the researcher interviewed school counselors working in alternative education programs, reviewed literature and research relating to the school counselor's role, and reviewed role statements provided by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). Using the information gathered, this study sought to more clearly identify what roles school counselors play in working with students served in alternative education programs.

The researcher also attempted to identify the reasons students are participating in alternative education. The term "alternative education" has been used throughout the literature to describe a variety of educational programs. Students served in these programs include potential dropouts, teenage mothers, students who have been expelled from regular school, and students who have not succeeded in the structure of regular education programs.

Data for this study were collected from 15 alternative education programs identified in the 1999-2000 Virginia's Public Education Directory and programs identified as Regional Alternative Programs in Virginia (Virginia Department of Education, 2000). Administrators and school counselors working at these schools were contacted by telephone and asked to participate in brief telephone interviews. In an attempt to standardize the

data collection process, questionnaires were developed by the researcher to use as guides in conducting the telephone interviews.

As there is limited research assessing the roles of the school counselor in alternative education settings, the results from this study may provide insight into this area. The information gained from this study may be useful in developing future training programs for school counselors as well as in the development of school based counseling programs to assist students in alternative education settings.

#### Rationale

Setting higher standards and accountability in education appears to be a major concern with most educators today. In 1995, the Virginia Board of Education established a state wide accrediting system, called the Standards of Learning (SOL's), that evaluates each school in the State (Virginia Department of Education, 2000). Using the SOL's, schools are evaluated and accredited based on the performance of their students on standardized tests. Obviously, the pressure to succeed has been placed on the schools, which in turn gets passed on to students, parents, teachers, and school administrators.

Despite the efforts of many educators, parents, and students to deal with some of the educational pressures students face today, some students have difficulty being successful in a regular education setting. To assist these students who are having difficulty, alternative types of education are often explored. The need for alternative types of education is particularly evident in the middle and high school years. Parents, teachers, and

administrators often ask for suggestions for alternative types of learning activities to assist children who are having difficulty in their classes.

However, even though some local school systems may attempt to assist by modifying instruction, some children continue to have difficulty and need more non-traditional types of instruction. Some of the students, who experience frustration or continued difficulties in a regular education setting, may exhibit their frustrations by exhibiting inappropriate behaviors.

Within the past five years, society has heard and seen more about school shootings and bomb threats made to schools. Listen to any news program or read any local newspaper and it appears that there is a nationwide concern regarding students bringing guns to school and potentially shooting their fellow classmates or teachers. The Office of the Surgeon General recently reported a national study on school violence found that today's schools are relatively safe, but youth violence has become a high visibility issue and high concern for many (Office of the Surgeon General, 2000). With concerns regarding school violence and other incidents such as bomb threats, some in society may worry that today's schools are not meeting the needs of the students they serve.

The shootings at Columbine High School in 1999 were a tragic event that took the lives of many innocent people. Since that day, a lot of effort has gone into researching how such an event happened and what steps need to be taken to prevent such a tragedy in the future. Arman (2000) emphasizes that after the shootings at Columbine High School, school counselors need to re-evaluate their counseling programs and roles in

working with their schools and assist in developing violence prevention programs and identification of at-risk students. Anderson (1995) supports the idea that school counselors need to change to meet the ever-changing needs of their students in his study outlining the characteristics of the indispensable counselor.

The ASCA (2000) provides support and guidance for school counselors by offering guidelines and position statements outlining the professional school counselor's role in working with various school programs and various types of children. In each of these statements ASCA addresses the leadership roles school counselors should take in working with such students and in program development. Most people agree that school counselors are often viewed as the best-trained individuals in a school to work with students identified "at-risk". If one is to assume that many of the students served in alternative education programs fall into the "at risk" or "potential dropout" category, it appears that school counselors should play an active role in alternative education programs. Despite the increase in use of alternative education programs, research that specifically identifies the role or responsibilities that school counselors have in working with such programs is limited.

#### Purpose

This study was designed to determine the current role of school counselors in alternative education programs in Virginia by investigating the services they provide to these programs. Data were collected from

designated alternative programs in Virginia in an attempt to answer these two specific research questions:

1. What services do school counselors provide in alternative education programs in Virginia?
2. What are the reasons that students are participating in alternative education programs in Virginia?

#### Significance of Study

The current study was designed to investigate an area of school counseling that has yet to be thoroughly researched. When the term “school counselor” is used, many people assume that it applies to those counselors working directly in the public schools with students in small group sessions and counselors working to develop school wide guidance programs to benefit the entire school population. However, with an increase in alternative education programs comes an increase in the need for school counselors to broaden their role to meet the needs of students in such programs.

Attempts were made to determine if any studies had been conducted which specifically investigated the roles and responsibilities of those counselors working in alternative education settings. A review of the literature found a lack of studies that specifically focused on defining the role of the school counselor in alternative education settings. The lack of research in this area was supported by correspondence with Jan Gallager, ASCA Past President 2000-2001, who, when asked if she knew of any

research in this area, stated, “I am unaware of research on counselors and their work in alternative education. Practicing counselors do not seem to have the time to do research on these critical issues.” (Email Correspondence August 7, 2000).

Virginia recognizes the need for alternative types of education as evident by the various programs offered to meet these needs. However, it is difficult to get a clear explanation as to the reasons students are placed in these alternative education programs and how counselors serve these students. Because of the lack of research looking at the school counselor’s role in alternative education and the lack of clarity of reasons students are placed in alternative programs in Virginia, this study was designed to gain current information regarding these issues.

#### Limitations and Assumptions

This study is limited in that the sample is specific to Virginia and thus affects its generalizability to other states. The data collected were self-report in nature and perceptions were limited to counselors and administrators working in alternative schools. It is assumed that all information provided by participants was provided in the most accurate manner. It is also assumed that by incorporating ASCA role statements as a guide, the results of this study will be applicable to school counselors in states similar to Virginia.

#### Summary

Society is becoming more aware of the stress put on students to succeed in school. With this awareness also comes concern that many

students are not able to deal with the stress they are facing and may act out in a destructive manner. The shootings at Columbine High School were a tragic event that opened many people's eyes to the possible potential for harm that some students may possess. Some feel that some of the stress placed on students could be reduced if school systems would provide alternative education programs to serve those students who are having difficulty in the regular school setting.

School counselors have often been viewed as the most qualified person to assist students with their social and emotional problems at school. However, school counselors are often asked to assume various other duties that take away from time they have to spend counseling students. School counselors are in an ideal position to work and provide services to students who may be identified at-risk or placed in alternative education.

There is an increasing need to meet the needs of students who may be placed in alternative education programs. This study was developed to investigate the school counselor's role in alternative education and provide some insight into an area that lacks sufficient research at this time.

## Chapter 2

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

A review of the literature revealed limited information that specifically addressed the role of the school counselor in alternative education programs. However, there does appear to be significant literature and research that attempts to describe alternative education programs and the role of school counselors as separate areas. Review of the literature in these two areas provided some clarification as to the role of the school counselor working in alternative education programs and insight into the reasons students are placed in these programs.

#### Alternative Education

##### The Need for Alternative Education

During the past 20 years, there has been an increased emphasis in public school standards, accountability, and excellence (Leone and Drakeford, 1999). The increased emphasis in these areas has also increased the pressure placed on students and teachers to be successful in reaching the goals set for them. However, DeLaRosa (1998) states that traditional schools are not meeting the needs of many students and are turning off a majority of students and thereby increasing the trend toward nontraditional education. Some suggest that another reason for the increase in alternative education programs is due to many schools' new zero tolerance policies, changes made to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), and an increase in youth violence (Tobin and Sprague, 2000). With all the changes

in schools today, it appears that it is the student who may often get overlooked when new policies and standards are put in to place.

One group of students who may be negatively affected by this increase in standards and excellence are the non-college bound. Literature supports the idea that non-college bound students often get overlooked (Leone and Drakeford, 1999; Tobin and Sprague, 2000). As a result of their inability to meet the higher standards or the feeling that they are overlooked, some students may lose motivation to even come to school. In a study published in 1991, the National Center for Education Statistics estimated that approximately 348,000 students age 15-24 drop out and cost the nation about \$77 billion annually (DeLaRosa, 1998). Also, in 1992 the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) reported drop-out rates to be between 15-30% among students (Bernstein, 1996).

After reviewing these drop-out rates, it is encouraging to find that drop-out rates reported in Virginia for the 1999-2000 school year (2.5%) were well below the NASP estimates (Virginia Department of Education, 2000). However, that 2.5% represents approximately 12,689 students who dropped out of Virginia schools during the 1999-2000 school year. With such a large portion of the student population at risk for dropping out, it makes sense to develop programs to assist in dropout prevention. Alternative education may not eliminate students from dropping out of school, but it is one option that has been presented to assist in dropout prevention.

Added to the concern of students dropping out of school are the concerns regarding the overall welfare of youth today. Coy (1999) reported on a 1998 the Childrens Defense Fund study that found one in three children are one year or more behind in school, one in two students never completes one year of college, one in eight children are born to teenage mothers, and one in eight students never graduate from high school. The stress youth are dealing with appears to be impacting them emotionally as it has been estimated that 15-22% of youth have mental health problems which warrant treatment (Lockhart and Keys, 1998). Ballard and Murgatroyd (1999) have also suggested that family support is decreasing with some students which may cause even more stress in the future.

#### Defining Alternative Education

Throughout the field of education there are many answers to the question, “What is alternative education?” Duke and Griesdorn (1999) suggested that when defining alternative education the domains of academic achievement and psychosocial behavior should be considered. Despite the efforts of some, alternative education has often been viewed as a punitive or “last chance” option and was often developed to deal with students who exhibit disruptive behaviors (Leone and Drakeford, 1999). Alternative education programs have also been defined as programs to harness the rebellious spirit of the time and have come to represent schools for the unruly and unmanageable that are designed to address misbehavior (Abbott, 1994; Nichols et al, 1998). Using these definitions, it would appear that alternative education was designed to deal with students exhibiting

significant behavior problems that could not be managed in a regular school setting.

Bernstein (1996) suggest that one reason students may exhibit behavior problems is due to conflicts in the classroom that are a result of adolescent students having difficulty with authority figures. Even though there continues to be behavior problems in some classrooms that require disciplinary action, the current students in alternative education programs and the types of programs appear more diverse. Duke and Griesdorn (1999) state that Virginia school divisions typically develop alternative education programs with a specific target population in mind. They suggest that these students may have been expelled or suspended, are older high school students lacking credits to graduate, may have child care issues, or may just get lost in the regular school setting. Other research has shown that absenteeism is a prevalent criterion for students being placed in alternative education programs (Casey, McSwain, and Beach, 1993; Rutherford and Quinn, 1999; Duke and Griesdorn, 1999). As the research indicates, there does not appear to be a clear answer to the question, “What is alternative education?”

In a pilot study conducted by this researcher (Helems, 2000), school counselors working in the public schools were asked to give their definition of alternative education. One of the counselors interviewed replied that her definition of alternative education was, “It is a way of learning that is out of the main stream, different from ordinary methods we have.” Another counselor responded that alternative education “is something you can give

these students to prepare for the real world, some kind of trade oriented, some kind of background skills so that they can get to go out and be successful so they are not on the streets.”

For the purpose of this study, the Virginia Department of Education was asked to provide the definition used to identify alternative education programs. Diane Jay, Office of Compensatory Education Programs, provided the following definition from the State alternative education regulations:

Defined in the broadest sense, alternative education involves learning experiences that offer educational choices which meet the needs of students with varying interests and abilities. Alternative education offers choices in terms of time, location, staffing, and programs.

Alternative education programs must be designed to help students acquire the knowledge and develop the skills and attitudes reflected in the goals of education for Virginia’s public schools. Alternative education programs already exist in many schools in the state. Among them are programs for the handicapped, for gifted and talented students, and for students enrolled in vocational classes; however, alternative education, in the broadest sense, is not limited to these programs.

The courses offered shall be approved by the local school board in accordance with regulations of the Board of Education. If regular high school credit is awarded to students in the alternative programs, regulations of the Board of Education shall be applicable. Instructional personnel used in alternative programs shall be licensed if any portion of their salaries is derived from public funds.  
(Email correspondence, September 13, 2000)

In reviewing some of the literature provided by alternative programs in Virginia, it is obvious that the types of programs offered and students served are as broad as the definition provided by the State. Therefore, it is

sometimes difficult to assign a specific definition to an area of education that may be purposefully broad so it can be adapted to meet various needs.

### Alternative Program Descriptions

The Virginia definition of alternative education is broad and allows local school divisions some flexibility in developing their specific programs. Despite the vagueness of this term, literature has been able to provide some possible guidelines to consider when beginning to develop successful alternative programs. Nichols and Utesch (1998) suggested that alternative education should generate and sustain a community within and make learning an engaging process. This suggestion sounds easy, but sometimes the students involved in alternative education programs may have such extenuating circumstances that becoming engaged in the learning process may be the last thing on their minds. To assist in making learning an engaging process, Leone and Drakeford (1999) suggest that alternative education needs to link classroom learning to community. Connecting alternative education programs to the community is also supported by De LeRosa (1998) who suggested that alternative education should offer accelerated programs, job training, and parent centers.

In looking at the day-to-day functions of alternative education programs, several recommendations have been made in the research to increase the potential for successful programs. One important necessity of a successful program is flexibility (DeLaRosa, 1998; Duke and Griesdorn, 1999). Providing flexibility in attendance options, class times, location of instruction could be a necessity in meeting specific needs of some students.

The lack of flexibility available in the public schools may be the primary cause of difficulty for some students, and eliminating this barrier may help students to succeed.

When working with students, particularly those in middle and high school, it is important to remember that social and emotional factors may contribute to lack of school success. That is why another key component recommended for inclusion in alternative education programs is the teaching of pro-social skills and the involvement of some level of counseling (Nichols and Utesch, 1998; Duke and Griesdorn, 1999). School counselors can play a vital role in assisting alternative education programs meet the social and emotional needs of these “at-risk” students.

### School Counselor Roles

#### History

Murray (1995) suggests that school counselors have a history that reflects unclear role definitions and confusion among counselors and society. It has also been well-documented that school counselors often assume many duties and responsibilities that are not always part of their job description (Hutchinson, Barrick, and Groves, 1986; Anderson and Reiter, 1995; Murray, 1995). Another concern of school counseling is that even though some schools have reported growing and dynamic counseling programs, other school counseling programs have become stagnant (O’Dell, Rak, Chermont, Hamlin, and Waina, 1996). Some possible explanations for these problems could be role confusion, lack of organization, public

misunderstanding of roles and programs, and lack of leadership by school counselors (O'Dell et al., 1996).

To assist in defining the school counselor's role, ASCA (2000) has issued position statements identifying the school counselor's roles and responsibilities in various areas. Despite guidance from ASCA, school counselors' roles often still vary depending on whom you talk to in the schools or the in communities they serve. In order for school personnel and those in the community to understand the school counselor's role, school counselors need to take an active role in better understanding and defining their current roles.

### Current Role

Despite some of the confusion regarding school counselor's roles, Coy (1999) states that the training and preparation of counselors today have given them the skills necessary to address the personal, social, educational, and career needs of school-aged children. The skills school counselors possess and their ability to meet the various needs of the schools they serve is supported by Gysbers and Henderson (1994, p. 32) as they stated, "Guidance programs are comprehensive in that a full range of activities and services, such as assessment, information, consultation, counseling, referral, placement, follow-up, and follow-through, are provided." Support for counselors having various roles was also found in a study conducted by Ballard and Mergutrod (1999), which suggested that school counseling services can be categorized into the areas of college/career counseling, developmental counseling, and crisis intervention counseling. Support for

various roles was also found in a survey of school counselors in the Southern United States, where school counseling services included counseling, consultation, and coordination (Carter, 1993). Even though the role of school counselors appear broad, the importance of school counselors providing individual counseling services to students is supported by teachers (Schmidt, 1995) and school counselors (Gibson, 1990).

Research has shown that teachers believe school counseling programs make a valuable contribution in working with students and the services they provide are needed and viewed positively (Keys & Lockhart, 1999; O'Dell, et al., 1996). School counselors have also been viewed as playing a crucial role in implementing and maintaining reform programs (Perry, 1995). School counselors can play a very important part in working with students who may be in need of alternative education.

ASCA (2000) has issued position statements in areas that specifically address the role of the school counselor in relation to students at risk (Appendix A), educational training (Appendix B), discipline (Appendix C), and drop out prevention (Appendix D). These statements outline the goals of school counselors in areas that are applicable to working with students in alternative education programs. However, in order for school counselors to begin pursuing new roles for themselves, a new model of school counseling services may have to be developed (Keys, Bemak, & Lockhart, 1998). Developing new identities and roles may not be an easy task for some since principals and school boards often have a significant influence in determining the functions of school counselors (Coy, 1999).

In a pilot study (Helems, 2000), three school counselors were asked to describe their current roles. Some of the activities they reported were: scheduling, parent conferences, discipline, career guidance, academic interventions, college preparation, testing coordinator, attendance monitor, school record maintenance, individual counseling, and group counseling. O'Dell, Rak, Chermonte, Hamlin, and Waina (1996) also reported that school counselors are often involved in activities related to community service coordinators, computer technicians, case managers, and high level clerks. One of the counselors interviewed in the pilot study (Helems, 2000) appeared to summarize the feelings of some school counselors when she stated, "One of the frustrations I have here at the middle school is not that I do not have the skills to do it, but there is just no time." This school counselor's statement is supported by Schmidt (1995) whose study of the school counselor's role in the Southeastern United States revealed that the counselors felt overloaded and overwhelmed with case load, administrative duties, crisis situations, and clerical responsibilities. It is unfortunate that the counseling aspects associated with the term "counselor" are often listed behind many of the other areas mentioned.

The idea that school counselors often assume responsibilities outside of their job description should not be a new concept to anyone familiar with public schools. One reason for the overwhelming job responsibilities often assumed by school counselors may be a result of their inadequate or confusing job descriptions. In a study by Gysbers, Lapan, and Jones (2000), they found that after reviewing 24 state school board associations'

policies for guidance and counseling, most policies had not kept pace with current conceptions of guidance and counseling.

### Future Role

As the field of alternative education becomes more responsive to the needs of high-risk students, school counselors' roles are changing to help meet those needs (Downs, 1999). Since most of the students identified for alternative education programs are often identified as "at risk", are potential dropouts, or have exhibited difficulties in getting along with their peers, they could be the very population school counselors are asked to work with in the future. As educational standards and expectations are changing, school counselors are in an ideal position to help develop programs and services to work with students in the schools.

In an effort to address future concerns, ASCA held a summit in 1994 to develop a model of collaboration between school counselors, agencies, and associations in government (Allen, 1994). In reviewing school counselors' roles in preparing students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, school counselors need to work with administrators to develop programs that are relevant to student needs and connect such services to the community (Staley & Carey, 1997). As there has sometimes been confusion regarding their roles, school counselors need to be clear in making their schools and communities more aware of the roles they can play in providing services to the students and families they serve (Ballard & Mergatroyd, 1999, O'Dell et al., 1996). To facilitate the implementation of such role changes, school counselors should work with administrators and teachers to address student

needs in the areas of educational development, career development, and personal social development (Schmidt, 1996). In changing the school counselors' role, counselors will need to move out of the office and into the community if such role change is to be accepted (Allen, 1994).

Some feel the school counseling model of dealing specifically with school personnel and school issues has little place in the future role of school counseling services (Welch and McCarroll, 1996). The idea that school counselors need to work more collaboratively within the community is supported in the literature (Lerner, 1995; Allen, 1994; Staley and Carey, 1997; Lockhart and Keys, 1998). By expanding their roles out of the regular school setting and into the community, school counselors may be able to develop prevention programs that incorporate community resources such as businesses, churches, and local mental health providers. This combining of services could potentially provide more support to the families of the students they serve.

In expanding their role beyond the closed system that many school counselors may be accustomed to, more thought may have to be given to the training of future school counselors. More actual field experience prior to being hired is one concern some administrators have when hiring new school counselors (Vaught, 1997). It is also suggested that school counselors in the future will need more skills in the areas of understanding the DSM-IV, manage care, welfare systems, court systems, residential programs, special education issues, mediation skills, and behavior management (Lockhart & Keys, 1998).

With the potential of future financial constraints on schools (Vaught, 1997; Keys, Bemak, & Carpenter, 1998, Allen, 1994, Anderson & Reiter, 1995) and those providing mental health services in the community (Bernstein, 1996, Lockhart & Keys, 1998), these services may have to work more closely together to meet needs of the students and families in their communities. It is speculated that the school counselor title could be changed to “community resources specialist” (Welch and McCarroll, 1993) or “school mental health counselor” (Lockhart and Keys, 1998) to better define the services they will provide.

#### Summary

Alternative education is becoming an area of growing interest to many educators. Some suggest that a growing population of students have difficulty in the traditional school setting due to the higher expectations placed on them. Combined the stresses that students have at school, the stresses of society, and the concern regarding school violence, and many may see alternative education programs as the answer to dealing with some of the problems students exhibit at school.

The role of the school counselor has typically been unclear to many. Efforts are taken to keep counselors up to date on current issues and the roles that are expected of them. However, school counselors often end up assuming duties that are not part of their job description. The role of the school counselor will need to change to work with the students of the future. More experience in working with at-risk students and knowledge of

community resources will be helpful to those counselors attempting to work with at-risk students in the future.

The information gathered supports that there has been a lot research conducted in these two areas. However, there does appear to be a lack of literature that specifically looks at the school counselor's role as it relates specifically to alternative education. This study will provide more information in this area and provide recommendations for areas of future research in this area.

## Chapter 3

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study was designed to bring clarification to the term “alternative education” and provide insight as to how school counselors view their roles in working within such programs in Virginia. This chapter will provide information about sample selection procedures, instrumentation development, data collection methods, and procedures used to analyze the data collected in this study. The methodology discussed in this chapter was designed to address the following research questions:

1. What services do school counselors provide in alternative education programs in Virginia?
2. What are the reasons that students are participating in alternative education programs in Virginia?

#### Sample

In the 1999-2000 Virginia’s Public Education Directory, 69 schools are identified as “Alternative” schools (Virginia Department of Education, 1999). However, in order to meet the alternative education needs in areas where funding may not be available for self-contained schools, 30 regional alternative education programs were established which encompass several school districts working together to run one regional program (Virginia Department of Education, 2000). Of these alternative education programs, 16 were contacted for inclusion in this study. In selecting programs,

attempts were made to select one alternative program from a “city” system and one alternative program from a “county” system from the eight existing educational regions identified in Virginia (Appendix E).

Initial contact was made with the school administrators and a script (Appendix F) was developed to assist in providing a standardized explanation of the study. After completing the interview process with administrators, they were asked whether a school counselor provided services to their program. Once school counselors were identified, they were then contacted. The researcher then explained the purpose of the study and asked them to participate in a telephone interview.

Confidentiality was explained to all participants in this study and emphasis was placed on understanding that individual participation was voluntary. Confidentiality of all those administrators and counselors who participated in this study was maintained using a coding system. Participants were also told that they could choose not to answer any questions and could withdraw from the interview at any time.

### Instrumentation

#### Questionnaires

Since the questionnaires were developed specifically for this study, they were distributed among a small sample of administrators and those working in the area of school counseling to assess their validity and gain feedback as to their usefulness. The questionnaires were designed to assist in answering the research questions of this study.

The Administrator Questionnaire (Appendix G) was developed to assist in answering the research question, “*What are the reasons that students participate in alternative education programs in Virginia?*” This questionnaire consisted of six questions that asked administrators to provide information about the number of students enrolled in their programs, grade levels represented, reasons for student placement, lengths of time students participate in their programs, and identification of a school counselor. The Counselor Questionnaire (Appendix H) was developed to assist in answering the second research question, “*What services do school counselors provide in alternative education programs in Virginia?*” This questionnaire consisted of eleven questions that asked counselors to describe their current job placement, educational background, various job responsibilities, and skills expected or needed of school counselors who may work with students in alternative education.

#### Data Collection Procedures

Telephone interviews were used as the data collection method due to the desire to use this study as an information-gathering tool that would provide an in-depth perspective from those working directly with alternative education programs. Siedman (1998) states that gathering data from interviews displays an interest in understanding the experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience.

Once the sample of schools was selected, telephone interviews were conducted with an administrator and school counselor working in the selected alternative education programs from March 19, 2001, through May

17, 2001. If contact could not be made with an administrator, the researcher documented the attempt and called the administrator at a later date. When contact was made with an administrator, an explanation of the study was given and permission was requested to proceed with the interview. Once the administrator granted permission, questions were asked of the administrator using the Administrator Questionnaire. Upon completion of administrator interview, the identified school counselors were contacted and asked to participate in this study. After explaining the purpose of the study to them and gaining their permission, the Counselor Questionnaire was used to assist in gathering the required data.

This researcher was responsible for contacting all participants and collecting and documenting all data for the study. Length of interviews ranged from 10 to 25 minutes and all participants reported that they felt they adequately answered all questions asked of them. The data collected were coded to increase confidentiality of the participants. Once all data were collected, the interview notes were transcribed using a word processor and the final transcriptions were saved on a computer disc.

#### Data Analysis

Data for this study were collected from transcribed notes of interviews conducted with administrators and school counselors. The information gained from the interviews was formatted for analysis using the QSR NUDIST (Gahan & Hannibal, 1998) software package. Using this program, categories were created in an effort to organize interview responses as they related to the research questions. As the responses were

reviewed, several sub-categories were created to more clearly organize the data provided in each category. Once all data were coded, reports were created that identified the specific school and participant response within each category. The researcher then reviewed these reports in an effort to establish consistent themes in a given category. The method of using themes and categories to analyze data collected by interviews has been established as a valid and effective method of qualitative data analysis (Merriman, 1998; Seidman, 1998). After analyzing all the data, the results were applied to the original research questions that sought to identify the school counselor's role in alternative education and the reasons students were placed in alternative education programs in Virginia.

#### Summary

This chapter provided a description of the research methods used in this study. The research questions for this study were identified and a description of how participants were selected was provided. An explanation of the development of the instrumentation was reported and the areas of data collection procedures and data analysis procedures were also discussed.

## **Chapter 4**

### **RESULTS OF STUDY**

This chapter will discuss the results generated by this study in relation to the proposed research questions. The results discussion will begin with a brief explanation of the demographics associated with this study. This explanation will be followed by a presentation of the results gathered in this study, divided into the three general categories: Reasons for Participation, School Counselor's Role, and Recommendations for Future Training. These three categories will be used as a basis for organizing the discussion of the results in this chapter. Within each category, sub-categories were created to further detail the information gathered and a flow chart was created in an effort to provide a visual display of the categorization (Appendix I). The resulting themes in each area will be discussed and specific participant responses will be incorporated for clarification and support. The transcribed results of the individual interviews are provided in Appendix J.

#### **Demographic Information**

Data were requested from 16 alternative education programs in Virginia. Data were not collected from one of these programs due to difficulty scheduling an acceptable time to speak with the administrator of that school. Therefore, information was gathered from 15 alternative school programs across eight identified educational regions of Virginia. Of these 15 programs, five programs were identified as being part of city systems,

eight were identified as being part of county systems, and two were identified as regional programs which served both county and city systems. The participants selected from these programs included 15 school administrators, 12 licensed school counselors, one licensed school psychologist, one licensed social worker, and one licensed vocational education teacher.

The size of the programs ranged from the smallest of 12 students currently enrolled in one program, to the largest in which an estimated 650 individuals were enrolled. The age of individuals served by these alternative programs ranged from preschool age children receiving day care services to adults coming back to receive high school diplomas or GED's. The age of students most often served in these programs were reported to be students in the middle school to high school range.

#### Reasons for Participation in Alternative Education

In reviewing all the data provided by administrators relating to the research question "*What are the reasons that students are participating in alternative education programs in Virginia?*", some themes emerged that defined the overall population of students served by particular schools. The three categories that were developed to classify the reasons for placement were *Behavior Reasons*, *Academic Reasons*, and a category identified as *Other Reasons* to categorize the remaining data.

#### Behavioral Reasons

This category was created to assist in identifying the behavioral reasons for placement in alternative education programs. Based on the

information provided, approximately 87% (13 out of 15) of the schools interviewed reported that students were placed in their programs due to some type of behavior problems. Two schools reported that their programs were designed specifically for students exhibiting behavior problems and another reported that approximately 10-15% of the students they served were in the program due to discipline issues. In reviewing all responses coded in this category, the most common terms used for behavioral placement were related to “discipline” and “expulsion” with 62% (8 out of 13) of respondents identifying one of these areas as a reason for placement in their program.

The responses of some administrators provided clarification as to the types of behavior problems exhibited by some of the students participating in alternative education programs. The perception that alternative education is designed to work with behavior problems was supported by two administrators who specifically stated that the emphasis of their programs had changed in recent years to incorporate more behavioral issues. Support that placement is for behavior reasons was also provided by an administrator who stated “A majority of students in our program are due to repeated behavior problems”. Reasons such as “Students are having multiple behavior problems in their schools” and “numerous discipline problems” were also provided. Some of the behavior problems they cited as possible reasons that students were placed in their programs involved fighting, continuous disrespect to teachers, threats, drug possession, and weapon possession. The data provided does suggest that in Virginia,

behavioral issues appear to be a consistent reason for participation in alternative education programs. Transcribed responses for this sub-category can be found in Appendix K.

### Academic Reasons

This category was created to assist in identifying the academic reasons that students are placed in alternative education programs. Based on the information provided, 73% (11 out of 15) of the schools interviewed reported students were placed in their programs for academic reasons. One program reported that it served students for “purely academic reasons” and does not accept students for behavioral reasons. In reviewing the data provided by the 11 schools that reported some placements due to academic reasons, there were two primary reasons for academic placement. These results suggest that 55% (6 out of 11) of administrators reported placement of students due to failing grades and 45% (5 out of 11) reported placement due to students lacking credits to graduate.

When talking with administrators, the impression was often given that academic progress in their programs was a priority despite some of the behavioral reasons that may have initiated student placement into the program. One administrator even stated that they “would like to say program is educational or vocational but that is not always the case”. Some of the academic areas addressed by the programs interviewed included getting students involved in vocational educational programs, working with adults to assist them in obtaining their GED, and some students received services to assist in passing the SOL’s. Even though academic reasons for

placement are not as prevalent as behavioral reasons for placement, there does appear to be a consistent area of emphasis where programs want to help “older students seeking to obtain a GED” or help all students they serve “to catch up academically”. Transcribed responses for the sub-category of *Academic Reasons* is found in Appendix L.

#### Other Reasons

This category was created to assist in identifying areas other than academic and behavioral reasons that students are placed in alternative education programs. In reviewing the data in this category, 67% (10 out of 15) of the alternative programs interviewed gave responses that would indicate reasons for placement as being for something other than academic or behavioral reasons. One program reported that they served students that “have problems conforming to expected standards” and another program described the reason for placement in their program as “Basically for one reason or another the student has not been able to function in regular school setting”.

Based on the information provided by the respondents, 60% (6 out of 10) of the schools cited truancy issues as a possible reason for placement and 60% (6 out of 10) cited teen pregnancy issues as possible reasons for placement. The other reasons that were given for possible placement included medical issues, special education needs, students lacking proficiency in speaking English, and students having a job. Transcribed responses for the sub-category identified as *Other Reasons* are located in Appendix M.

The data provided in these three areas add some clarification as to the reasons students are participating in alternative education programs in Virginia. These data also identify some patterns in the overall population of students served in alternative education by particular schools. When comparing all 15 schools to the three possible areas of placement (*Behavior-Academic-Other*), 47% (7 of 15) reported placement of students for all three reasons (*Behavior-Academic-Other*).

Many administrators reported that their programs offered a wide range of services and had students placed in their programs for more than one reason. One program shared that their program “is designed to assist behavior problems, getting a GED, getting a regular diploma, getting a graduation certificate, teen parents, TMR classes, school to work issues, and personal care”. Administrator comments such as “students come here for different reasons”, there is “a wide range” of reasons for placement, and “everybody’s program is different” appear to support the broadness of Virginia’s definition of alternative education.

#### School Counselor’s Role in Alternative Education

The importance of school counselors working in alternative education programs is supported by administrators who described their school-counseling program as “a very, very crucial component” and “a very big need”. When analyzing the data provided by school counselors that addressed the research question “*What services do school counselors provide in alternative education programs in Virginia?*”, sub-categories were created to better organize the data. These sub-categories are titled

*Licensure, Time at Site, Education, Meeting Needs, Direct Counseling, Administrative Duties, and Community Services.* The category of *Future Training* was also created to represent school counselors' responses relating to skills or training that they thought might be beneficial to school counselors working in alternative education settings. The themes and responses coded in these areas will be discussed below.

### Licensure

The categories of "Licensed" and "Non-Licensed" school counselor were established to better describe the participants identified as school counselors. The data provided indicates that 93% (14 out of 15) of alternative education programs surveyed employed someone licensed to provide counseling services to students. Eighty percent (12 out of 15) of the alternative programs interviewed reported that a licensed school counselor provided services to their program.

Three participants that were initially identified as school counselors by their administrators revealed that they did not have licensure in the area of school counseling as defined by the Virginia Department of Education (2000). The "Non-Licensed" participants included a licensed school psychologist, licensed social worker, and vocational education teacher. It should be noted that the three individuals that were not licensed school counselors were providing services within their areas of licensure.

Data were collected from both "Licensed" and "Non-Licensed" participants to determine if any notable differences existed in any of the identified sub-categories and to establish what percentage of alternative

education programs have licensed school counselors working in their programs. In reviewing the information provided by both the “Licensed” and “Non-Licensed” school counselors, the data did not reveal any notable differences between the two in relationship to any of the sub-categories of data collection that will be discussed. The response of the “Non-Licensed” participants as they relate to the identified sub-categories discussed below can be found in Appendix N.

Since one purpose of this study was to investigate the school counselor’s role in alternative education programs, the researcher did not feel it would be appropriate to include the data collected from the “Non-licensed” school counselors with data describing the school counselor’s role. Therefore, only responses provided by the 12 participants identified as “Licensed” school counselors were used in analyzing the sub-categories relating to the role of the school counselor. The decision to use only these 12 participants was made in an effort to ensure that the roles and activities discussed related directly to those licensed in the area of school counseling.

#### Time at Site

This category was created to determine if school counselors define their role in the alternative education programs as full-time or part-time. When analyzing the data provided in this category, approximately 67% (8 out of 12) of school counselors are provide full-time services while the remaining 33% (4 out of 12) provided part-time services. Of the school counselors that reported working part-time, three reported they also provide counseling services to students in regular education programs. Some of the

school counselors who reported their role as part-time did indicate that more services could be provided if the program employed a full-time school counselor. One school counselor also shared that one difficulty with being part-time was that they could not develop the “necessary relationships with the students” and some of the services provided were like putting “Band-Aids” on the problems. When looking at the response of a part-time counselor of “I provide on call services” and the comments of full-time counselor who stated “students can come by and talk at anytime”, these statements truly shows the spectrum of the school counselor’s role in alternative education programs. The responses for this category are in Appendix O.

#### Education

This category was developed to describe the educational background of the school counselors. Within this category 100% of the school counselors reported a minimum of a Masters level of education in some area of counseling. Several areas of Masters level work in counseling were reported with 25% (3 out of 12) identifying a Masters in Guidance and Counseling as the most prevalent. Some of the other areas mentioned were Masters in Counselor Education, Masters in Counseling and Development, Masters in School Counseling, and Masters in Psychology. Many of the school counselors also reported having background education or work experiences in other areas such as industry, pastoral counseling, business, and teaching. Individual responses to this category can be found in Appendix P.

### Meeting Needs

This category was created to assist in determining if school counselors felt they were effective in meeting the needs of the students that they served. Based on the data provided 50%(6 out of 12) responded that they were effective in meeting students' needs at this time and 50% (6 out of 12) reported they were not effective in meeting students' needs at this time.

Responses from some of the school counselors that felt effective in meeting student needs reported that they "have a student assistance team that comes in and provides some counseling services to students" and "have lots of supports such as a psychologist". Those responding that needs were not being met suggested that effectiveness could be improved with addition of such things as "Community services provide a counselor to come in and assist with groups and counseling" and if school counselors "were not tied up with other duties". The need for additional programs was supported by school counselors' comments of "add parent group to get parents involved" and a need was expressed for "alcohol and drug groups" and a "preschool program". The responses for the category of *Meeting Needs* can be found in Appendix Q

### Direct Counseling

This category describes any direct counseling activity the school counselor reported engaging in with students. In this category, 100% of the school counselors responded that they were involved in a minimum of three different types of direct counseling. In reviewing the data further it was

found that 83% (10 out of 12) of school counselors provided individual counseling, 83% (10 out of 12) provided group counseling, and 58% (7 out of 12) provided some type of career counseling.

Some of the individual counseling services focused on the areas of crisis intervention, cultural adjustments, self-esteem building, academic counseling, family conflicts, and discipline issues. The most prevalent group counseling services offered were in the area of anger management, but group counseling was also offered in the areas of social skills, group mediation, and job search skills. Some school counselors reported that they worked with students on an individual and group basis in the area of career counseling. Some school counselors express some frustration in that they were not providing as much direct counseling as they would like to provide. One school counselor shared that they “provide limited direct counseling” and another shared that they “do not do as much group counseling as would like to”. The responses to the *Direct Counseling* category can be found in Appendix R.

#### Administrative Duties

This category describes any administrative or program coordination duties the school counselors engaged in while serving the alternative program. In analyzing the data in this category, it was determined that 92% (11 out of 12) of school counselors reported being involved in at least three different types of administrative or program coordination duties. The types of duties varied and it was difficult to establish many clear and consistent themes in this area. However, based on their responses 50% (6 out of 12) of

school counselors were involved with some aspect of test coordination/administration and 42% (5 out of 12) of school counselors were involved in some aspect of scheduling.

Some of the other activities that school counselors reported they participated in were enrollment of students, head of child study teams, discipline, and assuming principal responsibilities when needed. Some school counselors responded that they “shared administrative duties”, were “next to the principal in pecking order”, “pinch hit if administrators is not there to meet with parents”, and were “sometimes viewed as assistant principal”. The responses to *the Administrative Duties* category can be found in Appendix S.

### Community Services

This category is defined as any services that school counselors reported that related to working with any member or organization in the community. When the data for this category were analyzed it revealed that most counselors attempt to link their role to the community in some manner. The results indicated that 75% (9 out of 12) of school counselors reported they connect their role to local businesses in some manner and 42% (5 out of 12) reported they sometimes use local community mental health services to assist them in meeting student needs.

Within the area of community involvement it appeared that many schools were very creative in their efforts to involve the community in their programs and expose their student to the community. One counselor expressed that they often have a very positive response to their parent’s

nights in which parents are invited to activities such as cookouts. Another school counselor reported that local businesses provide their program with gifts that are then used in incentive programs for the students. Other ideas that were shared that promote a good working relationship between school and community were the implementation of “career days where speakers come in” and “teen outreach programs to retirement homes”. One school counselor may have summarized the need for a close relationship with the community best when he stated that their relationship with the community was “two-fold” in that they work closely with the community services and the community services also provide them with needed support. The responses to the *Community Services* category can be found in Appendix T.

### Future Training

This category contained recommendations made by school counselors for future training and skills that may be helpful to those thinking of working in alternative education programs. The responses given by the school counselors interviewed did not yield any consistent areas of recommendations. However, the following five suggestions offered by some of the respondents appear to summarize the recommendations shared by some the school counselors.

1. Counselors need to be “compassionate but firm.”
2. Be aware that students are “bringing in baggage”.
3. Counselors working in alternative education must be flexible.
4. Future counselors interested in alternative education should do a practicum with at-risk students.

5. Counselors in alternative education need to have awareness of community resources.

It was also recommended that school counselors working in alternative education settings should “understand developmental and attachment issues”, “keep up to date on current issues like school violence”, be knowledgeable of school law”, “take a behavior management course”, and “have some prior experience working with at-risk students”. It should also be noted that those interviewed suggested that school counselors working in alternative education programs should possess the personal qualities of patience, sense of humor, and compassion. The responses to the *Future Training* category can be found in Appendix U.

#### Summary

This chapter has presented a discussion of the data collected. The data presented in the categories of *Reasons for Placement* and *School Counselor’s Role* has provided some insight as to the responsibilities school counselors have in alternative education programs and the types of students they are serving in these programs. Based on the data gathered, alternative education programs in Virginia serve a variety of students. The most prevalent reason for participation in alternative programs is some type of behavior problems exhibited by the student. Many students also participated in the programs due to academic reasons such as failing grades and lack of credits to graduate. There were also some instances of students participating in the programs as a result of teen pregnancy or truancy issues.

All of the school counselors interviewed reported that they had a minimum of a Masters level of education and most serve alternative education programs on a full-time basis. Some of their roles included individual counseling group counseling and career counseling. They were also often asked to assume some administrative and program coordination duties in the areas of scheduling and test coordination. Recommendations were made for future training and a discussion on how the roles of school counselors are linked to the communities was also provided.

## Chapter 5

### DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was designed to help clarify the role of the school counselor in alternative education programs in Virginia and to identify the reasons students participate in alternative education programs in Virginia. In this chapter the data that were collected are discussed as they relate to the identified research questions for this study. In reviewing the results of the data analysis, the identified themes and categories are discussed as they relate to the identified research questions. When discussing the results of the current study, attempts were made to relate current findings to past literature and research in the field. A list of recommendations for future practice and research is also provided.

The data discussed were the result of interviews that were conducted with administrators and school counselors working with 15 alternative education programs in Virginia in an attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. What services do school counselors provide in alternative education programs in Virginia?
2. What are the reasons that students are participating in alternative education programs in Virginia?

#### Summary of Results

The data collected to assist in answering the research question  
*“What services do school counselors provide in alternative education*

*programs in Virginia?*” provided several insights. Among these insights was that 93% (14 out of 15) of the alternative programs were providing some type of counseling to their students. Twelve out of the 15 schools interviewed reported having a licensed school counselor as defined by the Virginia Department of Education (2000). The remaining three schools employed a school psychologist, licensed social worker, or vocational education teacher to meet the counseling needs of their students. One consistent finding of all the school counselors interviewed was that they all had obtained at least a Masters level of education in various areas of school counseling and guidance. The data collected also indicated that over half (67%) of those school counselors interviewed reported that they served their alternative education programs on a full time basis.

As part of this study, school counselors were asked to report on the various types of activities they performed at their schools. In response to these questions, many answered that they often assume more than just counseling responsibilities. In fact, 92% reported that they were involved in at least three types of administrative or program coordination duties. The specific administrative and program coordination duties that the school counselors in this study reported most often were duties related to test coordination and scheduling.

Even though they reported assuming some administrative duties, 100% of the school counselors interviewed reported being involved in a minimum of three direct counseling activities. The counseling activities reported most often by the school counselors in this study were individual

counseling, group counseling, and career counseling. Individual counseling appears to be the primary role school counselors view themselves as performing as 83% of the respondents in this study reported engaging in individual counseling. The individual counseling activities included counseling for crisis intervention, cultural adjustments, self-esteem building, academics, family conflicts, and discipline issues. The group counseling activities that were most often reported included groups dealing with anger management, social skills, group mediation, and job search skills.

Based on the responses of the school counselors, it also appears that attempts were being made to link the school counselor's role to the community in many of the programs. This trend was evident as 100% of the school counselors reported that they engaged in at least two activities that related to linking their roles to the community. The two most often reported services to the community were connecting to local businesses in some manner or by using the local community mental health services to assist in providing mental health services to the students they served. Some counselors reported they organized parent night cookouts and used incentive programs to gain rewards provided by local businesses, which has helped to develop a positive school-community relationship.

With the added responsibilities of school counselors and the budgetary constraints placed on many school systems, it should not be surprising that 50% of the school counselors interviewed reported that despite their efforts, they sometimes felt they were not effective in meeting

the needs of the students they served. Those school counselors who reported that they felt effective in meeting students needs often reported having support of additional staff. Those that felt ineffective in meeting students' needs at this time shared that needs could be met if their programs were provided with more staff members, more financial support, and more support from local mental health services.

The second research question in this study asks "*What are the reasons that students are participating in alternative education programs in Virginia?*" The data collected in this area revealed that the reasons for participation can be categorized into three general areas: Behavior Reasons, Academic Reasons, and Other Reasons (which encompasses all other reported reasons for participation). When analyzing the data in these areas it was determined that 47% of the schools interviewed reported that they serve students in all three areas. Only one school reported serving students on a purely academic basis and two schools reported serving students primarily for behavior/disciplinary issues. The results of this study support the research and literature in this area as 87% of the schools interviewed reported that students were in their programs for behavioral reasons. The reasons of failing grades, lack of credits to graduate, teen pregnancy, and truancy issues were also reported as reasons for participation in alternative education programs. Some administrators expressed that the emphasis of their programs had changed from being academic based programs to programs that are receiving more referrals for behavior problems. Despite the perceived increase in behavioral reasons for referral, many

administrators continue to emphasize that promoting academic progress in their programs was a priority.

### Discussion and Implications

Previous literature and research often stated that school counselors assume administrative and clerical tasks as well as many other responsibilities outside of their identified role (Hutchinson and Groves, 1986; Anderson and Reiter, 1995; Murray, 1995). The results of this study support these previous findings as it was found that 92% of school counselors interviewed were involved in some type of administrative or program coordination duties. Some school counselors reported they were sometimes considered “next to principal in pecking order”, an “assistant principal”, or would “pinch hit for the administrator” when necessary.

It was encouraging that 93% of the alternative education programs employed someone to provide counseling services to their students. Another positive finding was 100% of the school counselors interviewed reported they participated in a minimum of three types of direct counseling activities. The most prevalent counseling activity reported was some type of individual counseling. The importance of school counselors engaging in individual counseling is supported in a study by Schmidt (1995) where teachers, parents, and students reported that the most important service provided by school counselors was one to one counseling. However, in this study some counselors expressed frustration as they “Do not do as much group counseling as would like to” and could do more counseling if they “were not tied up with other duties”.

One area that the literature has suggested would be helpful to school counselors working with alternative programs is the emphasis in linking services to the community (DeLaRosa, 1998; Leone and Drakeford, 1999). The school counselors interviewed for this study indicated that they were attempting to link their role to the community as 75% reported using local businesses in some manner and 42% reported using community mental health services. The idea of integrating the school environment and community to meet individual needs is supported by the Office of the Surgeon General as they reported that successful intervention programs with at-risk individuals must incorporate both the individual and their environment (Office of the Surgeon General, 2000). Counselors reported positive school-community experiences when they “conduct parent nights where we have cookouts and activities” and “when stores donate items to use as incentives for good behavior”. One school counselor suggested that the relationship between the school and community should be “two-fold” in that each provides needed services to the other.

The data collected in this study and a review of the literature suggest that school counselors working in regular and alternative education programs often assume administrative duties and emphasize the importance of providing individual counseling services to students. It also appears that school counselors working in alternative education settings attempt to link their role to their communities, while there is not significant research that supports this as a consistent role for counselors working in regular education programs.

Results of this study found that 50% of school counselors felt they were not effective in meeting the needs of the students they served. This was a discouraging finding because it has been documented that students may end up in alternative education programs because their behavior or academic needs could not be met in the regular education setting (DeLaRosa, 1998, Tobin and Sprague, 2000, Leone and Drakeford, 1999). School counselors emphasized that their responses of not meeting students needs were not due to a lack of their efforts or the efforts of other staff members in their programs. Those school counselors who reported that they were effective in meeting student needs reported they “work as a team” and often have assistance from outside agencies or additional support staff. School counselors who reported they were ineffective in meeting student needs suggested the addition of “alcohol and drug groups”, “preschool programs”, and a “parent group to get parents involved” would increase the effectiveness of their programs.

The research and the literature in the area of alternative education has often speculated that alternative education schools are typically designed to serve students who have experienced behavior problems in the regular school setting (Leone and Drakeford, 1999, Abbott, 1994, and Nichols and Utesch, 1998). This assumption was supported by some of the findings of this study as 87% of administrators interviewed reported that students were placed in their programs due to behavior problems. Some of the response by administrators specifically indicated students participated in their programs due to “numerous discipline problems”, “repeated behavior

problems”, and “multiple behavior problems in their schools”. However, it should be noted that the results of this study do not suggest that students are placed in alternative education programs in Virginia specifically for behavior problems. Based on the information provided, 73% of the schools reported that students were placed in their programs for some type of academic reason, 60% reported that placement was due to teen pregnancy or truancy issues, and 43% reported they served students for behavior, academic, and other reasons. One administrator’s comment appears to summarize the description of many alternative education programs in Virginia when he stated, “You will find that everybody’s program is different”.

It has been shown that alternative programs in Virginia are in alignment with the State definition of alternative education in that they serve students for a variety of reasons. With such a variety of students being served, it would appear that school counselors would have various roles and have to possess a variety of skills to assist the students they serve. The roles of the school counselors described in this study does support that school counselors serving alternative education programs possess a variety of skills and assume various roles in alternative education programs in Virginia.

### Recommendations

Based on all the information that has been collected in this study and referenced in the literature, the following recommendations are provided for consideration of future practice and research. When reviewing the findings,

it appeared that recommendations could be made in the specific areas of Recommendations for School Counselors, Recommendations for Counselor Education Programs, and Recommendations for Alternative Education Programs.

#### Recommendations for School Counselors

1. Further research is needed in defining the roles and expectations of school counselors working in the field of alternative education. Expansion of the current study to look directly at the direct counseling skills provided or the school counselor's role in working with the community should be considered.
2. This study revealed that only 50% of school counselors felt they were effective in meeting the needs of the students they served. Therefore, it is felt that future studies should investigate the effectiveness of school counselors working in various alternative education programs.
3. It is recommended that school counselors at all levels should continue to make efforts to remain informed of current research regarding the school counselor's role as it relates to current issues such as school violence and drop-out prevention.
3. School counselors working in alternative education programs should continue to make themselves more aware of the community services that are available to them and continue to incorporate these services into the school when possible. This

coordination could assist in developing positive school–community relations.

#### Recommendations for Counselor Education Programs

- 1 With regards to the future training of school counselors, it appears that more emphasis should be placed on providing students with as many practicum or volunteer experiences as possible in the areas of working with at-risk youth.
2. This study, as well as research, has shown that school counselors often assume responsibilities other than direct counseling activities. Therefore, counselor education programs should make students aware of the various job responsibilities, besides direct counseling, that may be expected of them once they enter the field.

#### Recommendations for Alternative Education

1. This study revealed that school counselors can play a vital role in working with alternative education programs. Therefore, it is recommended that alternative education programs should incorporate the use of school counselors in providing services to their students on a regular basis.
2. As cited in this study and the literature, it is important to link the services provided by alternative education programs to the community. Therefore, alternative programs should become aware of all available resources in their communities and work

to establish a good working relationship with as many community resources as possible.

### Summary

The information in this chapter has provided an overview of the findings and their relationship to the literature and research in the field of school counseling and alternative education. Results of this study indicate that school counselors perform counseling and administrative duties while working in alternative education settings. Their most active role for this study was reported as providing individual counseling to students. However, they also reported that test coordination and scheduling often play a role in the duties they perform.

The reasons for student participation in alternative education were also discussed. The finding of this study appear similar to the perception in the literature that alternative education is designed primarily to serve students who exhibit behavior problems in the regular school setting. However, these finding also indicated that the alternative programs in Virginia serve students for a variety of reasons including behavior problems, failing grades, lack academic credits to graduate, truancy issues, or teen pregnancy.

After discussing all the results, recommendations were made to address potential areas of future research as they relate to the results and research questions of this study. Recommendations were made which related specifically to school counselors, counselor education programs, and alternative education programs.

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## Appendix A

### THE PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR AND STUDENTS AT-RISK

(Adopted 1989-90; revised 1993, 1999)

#### AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION POSITION

Professional school counselors at all levels make a significant, vital and indispensable contribution toward the academic, career and personal/social success of “at-risk” students. School counselors work in a leadership role with other student service professionals including social workers, psychologists and nurses, in liaison with staff and parents, to provide comprehensive developmental counseling programs for all students.

#### RATIONALE

There are probably as many definitions of the “at-risk” student as there are school districts. Any student may be at risk with respect to dropping out of school, becoming truant, performing below academic potential or exhibiting behaviors that may be harmful to self and/or others. The underlying reasons for these behaviors often deal with personal and social concerns such as poor self-esteem, family problems, unresolved grief, neglect or abuse. Students experiencing these concerns can be helped by professional school counselors. The decision to drop out of school can carry with it devastating lifelong implications. The school counselor, in conjunction with other school staff members, identifies potential dropouts and other students considered at-risk and works closely with them to help them stay in school or find alternative means of completing their education.

#### THE PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR’S ROLE

The school counselor provides proactive leadership in the area of prevention and consults in identifying “at-risk” students. The goal is to identify and intervene before they move through a continuum of self-destructive behavior. The school counselor provides responsive programs, including short-term individual, group, family and crisis counseling; provides programs for individual planning to meet academic, educational and career counseling needs; provides curriculum programs to strengthen personal/interpersonal skills (choice, self-acceptance, feelings, beliefs and behaviors, problem-solving, decision-making); identifies suicidal students, counsels them and refers them to appropriate outside agencies; provides in-service support presentations to staff; provides referrals for additional specialized support services within the district and from other community resources; and provides consultation with and support for parents/guardians of at-risk students. The school counselor works as a member of a team with other student service professionals.

#### SUMMARY

Professional school counselors, through a comprehensive, developmental, K-12 school-counseling program, work with other educators and community resources to provide prevention, early identification and intervention for all students who may be considered at-risk.

#### POSITION STATEMENT

## *Appendix B*

### THE PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR AND EDUCATIONAL PLANNING (Adopted 1994, Revised 2000) AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION POSITION

The professional school counselor works with administrative, curricular and instructional staff to ensure all students have the opportunity to design academically challenging programs of studies.

#### RATIONALE

Specialization within a student's program of studies should lead to successful completion of requirements for the chosen post-secondary option, while permitting opportunities for the development of other competencies. A systematic educational planning program promotes a student's opportunity to make individual choices geared to his or her unique profile of abilities, interests and goals. Lack of educational planning leads to inequities based on gender, stereotypical attitudes and students' special needs.

#### THE PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR'S ROLE

Professional school counselors play a critical role in assisting students in the development of a comprehensive plan allowing for exploration of their educational and career opportunities. The professional school counselor possesses knowledge of national, state and local goals and programs identifying how students can best achieve success in their post-secondary plans. The professional school counselor advocates for developmental guidance programs involving individual and group activities stressing educational planning (i.e. decision-making, career awareness and exploration). The professional school counselor educates parents to become active members of the decision-making team. Collaboration within the education community is necessary to provide all students with better choices and opportunities for quality educational programs. The professional school counselor takes a proactive role in facilitating changes that afford students, parents and staff the opportunity to accurately assess student strengths, interests and preferences and encourages the selection of challenging educational programs.

#### SUMMARY

The professional school counselor advocates for equal educational planning opportunities for all students. Decisions that a student makes about a chosen course of study must be based upon information unique to the individual and his or her profile of skills and knowledge.

#### POSITION STATEMENT

## Appendix C

### THE PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR AND DISCIPLINE

(Adopted 1989; revised 1993, 1999)

#### AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION POSITION

The professional school counselor urges school districts to develop policies clearly distinguishing the role of the counselor and any professional staff who administer disciplinary action. Such policies promote the use of the school counselor as a resource person, a person perceived by all as a neutral and resourceful mediator. Such policies describe the ability and limits of the professional school counselor as disciplinarian. The roles of all staff members need to be identified and communicated to students, parents and community members.

#### RATIONALE

Educators have always been involved in the development of moral and social behavior in students. Contemporary discipline programs in American education have taken a developmental approach stressing students' responsibility for self and controlling their own behavior. The roles of all professional staff members in regard to discipline need to be identified and communicated to students, parents and other staff.

#### THE PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR'S ROLE

The school counselor is increasingly being called upon to act as mediator in teacher-student conflicts and in student-student conflict situations. The school counselor is also called upon as a support and resource person with parents who have a noncompliant student. The professional school counselor plays a role in the developmental aspects of discipline programs. It is not the school counselor's role to mete out punishment but to help create effective behavior change. The school counselor acts as a liaison, representative and mediator to help create effective behavior change, keeping in mind students' individual needs. The school counselor, in working with those students who are part of the non-Exceptional Education caseload, would assist in identifying students who qualify under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to determine whether those disciplinary referrals to the counselor would necessitate future action under this act.

#### SUMMARY

The professional school counselor's role in the disciplinary referral process must be clearly delineated by district administrative policy. Such policy needs to describe the ability and limits of the professional school counselor's involvement in disciplinary action. The professional school counselor should be, by policy, perceived by all as a neutral and resourceful mediator of those involved in conflict resolution. It is not the counselor's role to mete out punishment but rather to be involved in helping to create effective behavior change.

#### POSITIONS STATEMENT

## Appendix D

### THE PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR & DROPOUT PREVENTION/STUDENTS-AT-RISK (Adopted 1989-90; revised 1993, 1999) AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION POSITION

Professional school counselors at all levels make a significant, vital and indispensable contribution toward the mental wellness of “at-risk” students. School counselors work as a member of a team with other student service professionals including social workers, psychologists and nurses, in liaison with staff and parents, to provide comprehensive developmental counseling programs for all students including those identified as being potential dropouts or at-risk.

#### RATIONALE

There are probably as many definitions of the "at-risk" student as there are school districts. Any student may at any time be at risk with respect to dropping out of school, becoming truant, performing below academic potential, contemplating suicide or using drugs. The underlying reasons for these behaviors often deal with personal and social concerns such as poor self-esteem, family problems, unresolved grief, neglect or abuse. Students experiencing these concerns can be helped by professional school counselors. The decision to drop out of school can carry with it devastating lifelong implications. The school counselor, in conjunction with other school staff members, identifies potential dropouts and other students considered at risk and works closely with them to help them stay in school or find alternative means of completing their education.

#### THE PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR’S ROLE

The professional school counselor provides consultation in defining and identifying at-risk students. The goal is to identify and intervene before they move through a continuum of self-destructive behavior. The school counselor provides responsive programs, including short-term individual, group, family and crisis counseling; provides pro-grams for individual planning to meet academic, educational and career counseling needs; provides curriculum programs to strengthen personal/interpersonal skills (choice, self-acceptance, feelings, beliefs and behaviors, problem-solving, decision-making); identifies suicidal students, counsels them and refers them to appropriate out-side agencies; provides in-service support presentations to staff; provides referrals for additional specialized support services within the district and from other community resources; and provides consultation with and support for parents/guardians of at-risk students. The school counselor works as a member of a team with other student service professionals.

#### SUMMARY

Professional school counselors work with other educators and community resources to provide early identification and intervention for potential dropouts and other students who may be considered at-risk through a comprehensive, developmental, K-12 counseling program.

#### POSITION STATEMENT

## Appendix E

### Geographic Regions and Schools

#### **Region 1**

Charles City County.....Chesterfield.....Colonial Heights City  
Dinwiddie.....Goochland.....Hanover.....Henrico.....Hopewell City  
New Kent.....Petersburg City....Powhatan.....Prince George  
Richmond City.....Surry.....Sussex

#### **Region 2**

Accomack.....Chesapeake City.....Franklin City.....Hampton City  
Isle Of Wight.....Newport News City....Norfolk City.....Northampton  
Poquoson City.....Portsmouth City.....Southampton.....Suffolk City  
Virginia Beach City.....Williamsburg City..... York

#### **Region 3**

Caroline....Colonial Beach.....Essex.....Fredericksburg City  
Gloucester.....King George.....King Queen.....King William.... Lancaster  
Mathews.....Middlesex.....Northumberland.....Richmond.....Spotsylvania  
Stafford.....West Point.....Westmoreland

#### **Region 4**

Alexandria City.....Arlington.....Clarke.....Culpeper.....Fairfax.....Fairfax City  
Falls Church City....Fauquier.....Frederick.....Loudoun.....Madison  
Manassas City.....Manassas Park City.....Orange.....Page.....Prince William  
Rappahannock.....Shenandoah.....Warren.....Winchester City

#### **Region 5**

Albemarle..... Amherst..... Appomattox.....Augusta..... Bath.....  
Bedford.....Bedford City..... Buena Vista City.... Campbell.....Charlottesville  
City. Fluvanna..... Greene.....Harrisonburg City.... Highland..... Lexington  
City.....Louisa..... Lynchburg City..... Nelson.....Rockbridge.....  
Rockingham..... Staunton City..... Waynesboro City.....

#### **Region 6**

Alleghany Hglnds....Botetourt.....Covington City....Craig.....Danville City....Floyd  
Franklin....Henry.....Martinsville City....Montgomery.....Patrick.....Pittsylvania  
Roanoke.....Roanoke City.....Salem City

#### **Region 7**

Bland....Bristol City....Buchanan....Carroll.....Dickenson.....Galax City....Giles.....Grayson  
Lee....Norton City.....Pulaski.....Radford City.....Russell....Scott.....Smyth.....Tazewell  
Washington....Wise..... Wythe

#### **Region 8**

Amelia.....Brunswick.....Buckingham.....Charlotte.....Cumberland.....Greensville  
Halifax.....Lunenburg.....Mecklenburg...Nottoway.....Prince Edward

## Appendix F

### Initial Contact Script

Using the names and numbers provided in the Virginia Educational Directory and the listing of Virginia Regional Alternative Programs, the designated alternative programs will be contacted and the following script will be used as a guide for the initial phone contact.

My name is Darryl Helems and I currently working in the schools and working on my doctorate in Counselor Education at Va. Tech. As part of my studies, I am conducting a study that will investigate the reasons students are referred to alternative education programs and the services that school counselors provide in these programs. I am contacting alternative education programs throughout Virginia in the hopes of gaining permission to conduct phone interviews with administrators and school counselors that work in alternative education programs. The interviews should last no longer than 15 minutes for administrators and 30 minutes for school counselors. In the final results, no specific identifying information will be provided regarding the schools, administrators, or counselors used to obtain the data. After gathering all my data, I hope the information gained will be useful in further developing appropriate services provided to students in alternative education and in the training of school counselors who may work with alternative education programs.

*I realize school systems vary on the procedural guidelines that must be followed for sharing information about the services they provide and the students they serve. I was hoping you could inform as to what the procedure is for your system and if you would be willing to participate in this study.*

After using this script, the suggested procedure will be followed for obtaining permission to conduct further interviews.

## Appendix G

### Administrator Questionnaire

#### *Administrator Phone Interview Guide*

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study.

1. Review initial script regarding purpose of study.
2. First, I would ask you if you have any further questions regarding my study and its purpose?
3. I need to inform you that your participation in this interview is voluntary and if at any time you feel you do not feel comfortable answering specific questions or feel the need to withdraw from the interview, you have the right to end the interview. I also should inform you that your name will not be used in the results and no specific identifying information will be given about your school.
4. Having explained the purpose of my study, this interview, and informed you of your rights, do you give your verbal consent to continue with this interview?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (If YES, continue to next question. If NO, ask participate for clarification of concern and either provide further information or end interview)
5. QUESTION #1  
 What grade levels does your school serve?
6. QUESTION #2  
 Describe the reasons that students are placed in your alternative education program.
7. QUESTION #3  
 What is the typical length of time a student spends in your program?
8. QUESTION #4  
 Is participation in your program voluntary by choice of the student/parent or is it mandated by the school system or outside agency?
9. QUESTION #5  
 Does a school counselor provide services to your program? If yes, what is the name of this counselor and how could they be contacted?
10. QUESTION #6  
 Do you have any other information you would like to share that could further explain for what reasons students are placed in your program.

Thank you very much for your cooperation and your time. If you have any questions after we complete this interview please feel free to contact me at home 540-774-5764 or at work 540-483-5105.

## Appendix H

### Counselor Questionnaire

My name is Darryl Helems and I am currently working on my doctorate in Counselor Education at Va. Tech and have worked in the public schools for 7 years. As part of my doctorate studies, I am conducting a study that will investigate the reasons students are referred to alternative education programs and the services school counselors provide to alternative education programs. I have talked with (administrator name) and he/she gave me your name as the counselor that works with the (school name) alternative program. If you give your permission, I would like to conduct a brief phone interview with you to gather information from you about the services you provide. Your name will be kept confidential when I write up my final results and your participation in this interview is voluntary. If you do agree to participate, you have the right to refuse to answer any questions and may withdraw from the interview at any time. I will be taking notes of our conversation and would be happy to supply you with a copy of these notes after the interview is complete. Do you have any questions about the information I have provided? Do I have your consent to proceed with the interview?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

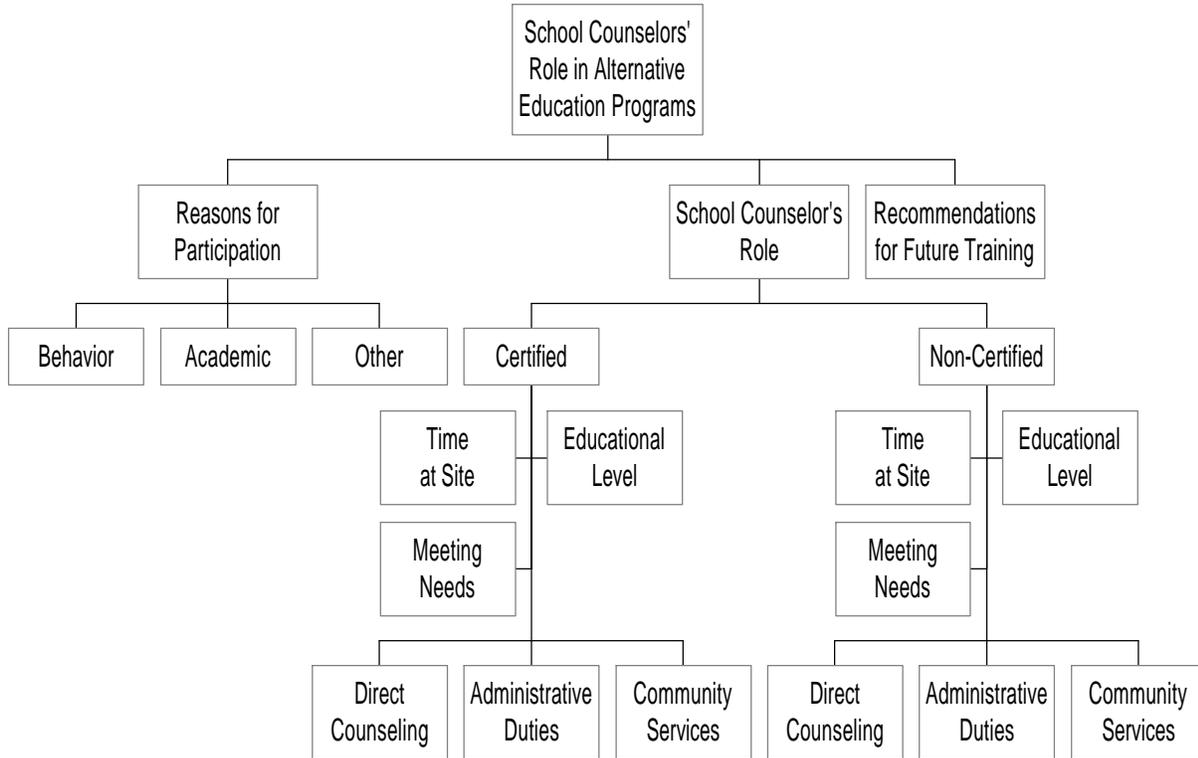
\_\_\_\_\_  
Yes/No                      Date/Time

1. What grade level students do you serve?
2. Describe your educational background and prior work experiences.
3. Are the services that you provide to the alternative education program considered part-time or full-time services?
4. Do you work specifically with students in the alternative education program?  
(If NO, "Describe the other populations you work with and what services you provide to them?")
5. What types of direct counseling services do you provide to the students in the alternative education program?
6. Describe any administrative or program coordination (program planning, evaluation, and accountability) services you provide?
7. Do you feel the services you are currently providing are meeting the needs of the students you serve?  
(If NO, "What other services do you feel would be beneficial?")
8. How are the services you provide linked to the community?
9. What type of training background or staff development have you had, or would recommend to other counselors, that assist in working with students in alternative education programs?
10. Is there any other information you could provide that would help clarify the types of services you provide?
11. Do you have any questions of me regarding this interview?

Thank you for your cooperation and if you have any questions or concerns please contact me at 540-774-5764 or 540 483-5105. If you would like I could mail you a copy of the notes I took for your records. Would you like a copy of these notes? \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix I

### Category Flow Chart



## Appendix J

### Participants Interview Transcripts

#### School One

\*Administrator Response

\*What grade levels does your school serve?

8th and 9th grades

Students seeking a GED

\*Describe the reasons that students are placed in your alternative education program.

Because they are not successful academically

Not passing SOL's

Failed 1 or 2 grades

Purely academic reasons

\*What is the typical length of time a student spends in your program?

2 years, but not always

Some only spend 1 semester

\*Is participation in your program voluntary by choice of the student/parent or is it mandated by the school system or outside agency?

School and parent can request placement

Have major meetings to review applicants

Feeder schools list students they feel would benefit

Have a long waiting list

\*Does a school counselor provide services to your program? If yes, what is the name of this counselor and how could they be contacted?

Yes we do have a school counselor

Part-time basis (2 days out of 5)

\*Do you have any other information you would like to share that could further explain for what reasons students are placed in your program?

\*Counselor Response

\*Describe your educational background and prior work experiences.

Undergraduate Economics

Have a Masters in Counseling (60 hours)

Been working with at risk for 21 years

\*Are the services that you provide to the alternative education program considered part-time or full-time services?

Part-time services, 2 days a week

\*Do you work specifically with students in the alternative education program?

(If NO, "Describe the other populations you work with and what services you provide to them?")

No, do not work specifically with alternative education students

Work with regular education middle school 3 days a week

\*What types of direct counseling services do you provide to the students in the alternative education program?

Provide limited direct counseling

Crisis intervention

Individual counseling

Group mediation

Peer problems

Attendance problems

Do not do as much group counseling as would like to

\*Describe any administrative or program coordination (program planning, evaluation, and accountability) services you provide?

Scheduling

Paper work for GED and SOL

Test administration

Organize internships for students

\*Do you feel the services you are currently providing are meeting the needs of the students you serve? (If NO, "What other services do you feel would be beneficial?")

Are providing satisfactory services now

Could always be doing more

Would help to add parents group to get parents involved

Would help to develop ADHD groups for students and parents

\*How are the services you provide linked to the community?

Shadowing to local businesses

Learning environment is community based

Take students to local elementary school to assist programs there

\*What type of training background or staff development have you had, or would you recommend to other counselors, that would assist in working with students in alternative education programs?

Do community based observations

Have awareness of community resources

Learn to identify problems earlier

Do practicums with at risk students

Look at Boys and Girls clubs

## School Two

### \*Administrator Response

\*What grade levels does your school serve?

Grades 8-12 and adults

\*Describe the reasons that students are placed in your alternative education program.

Some type of reportable offense

8th graders mainly are disciplinary referrals

referred by principals and school boards

9-12 generally not successful in H.S.

Can be discipline, teen parent, other medical issues

Parent can request placement but has to go through school

\*What is the typical length of time a student spends in your program?

There is no timeline

Program is individualized

Review cases every semester

Most stay at least part of semester some will stay indefinitely

\*Is participation in your program voluntary by choice of the student/parent or is it mandated by the school system or outside agency?

Participation is both voluntary and mandated

8th grade discipline issues are almost always mandated by school

9-12 can be either

\*Does a school counselor provide services to your program? If yes, what is the name of this counselor and how could they be contacted?

Yes a school counselor provides services to our program

Part-time basis (16-18 hours a week)

Volunteers with 8th graders

\*Do you have any other information you would like to share that could further explain for what reasons students are placed in your program?

Older students seeking to obtain GED

Operate as regional program so that if other placements do not work, students are sent to this site

### \*Counselor Response

\*Describe your educational background and prior work experiences.

Behavior Specialist position in a community agency

Masters in School Counseling

\*Are the services that you provide to the alternative education program considered part-time or full-time services?

Part-time

\*Do you work specifically with students in the alternative education program?

(If NO, "Describe the other populations you work with and what services you provide to them?")

Strictly with alternative education students

\*What types of direct counseling services do you provide to the students in the alternative education program?

Individual counseling

Group Counseling

Behavior Management

Social skills group

Anger management groups

Academic counseling

\*Describe any administrative or program coordination (program planning, evaluation, and accountability) services you provide?

Pinch hit if administrator is not there to meet with parents

Enrollment of students

\*Do you feel the services you are currently providing are meeting the needs of the students you serve? (If NO, "What other services do you feel would be beneficial?")

Not really meeting needs of students

Tapping them and doing more now than we were

Another counselor on staff would help

Community services provide a counselor to come in and assist with groups and counseling

\*How are the services you provide linked to the community?

Provide job placements

Invite businesses to come in and speak

Take students to local colleges sometimes

\*What type of training background or staff development have you had, or would you recommend to other counselors, that would assist in working with students in alternative education programs?

A good internship placement

Volunteer with community programs that work with at risk students

Be involved in school programs that work with at risk students

\*Is there any other information you could provide that would help clarify the types of services you provide?

### School Three

\*Administrator Response

\*What grade levels does your school serve?

Grades 7-12

\*Describe the reasons that students are placed in your alternative education program.

Because students are not successful in regular academic setting

Referred for truancy

Referred for academic problems

Referred for problems with the law

Referred for disciplinary reasons

\*What is the typical length of time a student spends in your program?

Students sign a contract to be at school for a year

\*Is participation in your program voluntary by choice of the student/parent or is it mandated by the school system or outside agency?

Students have to be recommended from home school

Student can apply to home school for recommendation

Recommendations for placement also come as result of disciplinary referral

\*Does a school counselor provide services to your program? If yes, what is the name of this counselor and how could they be contacted?

Yes a school counselor provides services to our program

\*Do you have any other information you would like to share that could further explain for what reasons students are placed in your program?

\*Counselor Response

\*Describe your educational background and prior work experiences.

Behavior Specialist position in a community agency

20 years of pastoral counseling

Have a masters in psychology

Endorsed in secondary guidance

\*Are the services that you provide to the alternative education program considered part-time or full-time services?

Provide full time services

\*Do you work specifically with students in the alternative education program?

(If NO, "Describe the other populations you work with and what services you provide to them?")

Exclusively with alternative education students now

\*What types of direct counseling services do you provide to the students in the alternative education program?

Mostly provide services on crisis basis

Run anger groups

Used to be able to be more of a counselor

\*Describe any administrative or program coordination (program planning, evaluation, and accountability) services you provide?

Plan career days

Testing coordination

Sometimes views as assistant principal

Head child study teams

\*Do you feel the services you are currently providing are meeting the needs of the students you serve? (If NO, "What other services do you feel would be beneficial?")

Probably not meeting need of this population

Need more people to help out

Could use assistance from outside programs in community or colleges

\*How are the services you provide linked to the community?

Linked some students up with a local bank

Don't really have any links now

Have done teen outreach programs to retirement homes

Family services comes in sometimes

Radford has provided some practicum students

\*What type of training background or staff development have you had, or would you recommend to other counselors, that would assist in working with students in alternative education programs?

Have a background similar to the students you work with

Show students you have a sense of humor

Show students you have compassion

Interact with students a lot

\*Is there any other information you could provide that would help clarify the types of services you provide?

Assist with SOL test

Provide study skills groups

Run relaxation groups

### School Four

\*Administrator Response

\*What grade levels does your school serve?

Grades 9-12

\*Describe the reasons that students are placed in your alternative education program.

Failure of 2 or more classes

Chronic absenteeism

Disciplinary problems

Older students

\*What is the typical length of time a student spends in your program?

One semester minimum

Maximum 18 months

\*Is participation in your program voluntary by choice of the student/parent or is it mandated by the school system or outside agency?

There is a referral policy from principals or regular schools

Discourage parent referrals

On occasions parents refer, but refer back to home school for referral

\*Does a school counselor provide services to your program? If yes, what is the name of this counselor and how could they be contacted?

Currently we do not have one on staff

I serve as administrator and counselor

\*Do you have any other information you would like to share that could further explain for what reasons students are placed in your program?

Students come here to make new choices

Come here for different reasons

Like to say program is educational or vocational but that isn't always the case

\*Counselor Response

\*Describe your educational background and prior work experiences.

Undergraduate in psychology

Masters in guidance and counseling

Have had degree 4 or 5 years

\*Are the services that you provide to the alternative education program considered part-time or full-time services?

Provide part-time services

Need a full time counselor

\*Do you work specifically with students in the alternative education program?

(If NO, "Describe the other populations you work with and what services you provide to them?")

No, I work with students that are outside of alternative education, still clarifying role

\*What types of direct counseling services do you provide to the students in the alternative education program?

Career exploration

Small group counseling

Individual counseling as needed

\*Describe any administrative or program coordination (program planning, evaluation, and accountability) services you provide?

Assume principal duties at this time

Bring in guest speakers

Make outside contacts

Establish a mentoring program

Contacting community resources

\*Do you feel the services you are currently providing are meeting the needs of the students you serve? (If NO, "What other services do you feel would be beneficial?")

Meeting the needs of students on a limited basis

With additional assistance could do more

Once staff is in place we can put some good programs in

Difficult to do one thing well when doing so many other things

\*How are the services you provide linked to the community?

Currently working with county prevention board

Boys Scouts to provide mentoring

\*What type of training background or staff development have you had, or would you recommend to other counselors, that would assist in working with students in alternative education programs?

Have a background in psychology

Take behavior management classes

Anger management training

Conflict resolution training

Have patience and do not personalize things

\*Is there any other information you could provide that would help clarify the types of services you provide?

Students will push your patience

Sometimes a negative concept of type of students in alternative education, they are bad kids

Bothers me that students are labeled bad

Be aware that students are bringing in baggage

### School Five

\*Administrator Response

\*What grade levels does your school serve?

Technically k-12

Just implemented elementary program

Most secondary age

\*Describe the reasons that students are placed in your alternative education program.

Wide range

Teen parents

Expelled students

Behind in grade levels

Truancy problems

Probably most are behavior problems

Basically for one reason or another student has not been able to function in regular school setting

\*What is the typical length of time a student spends in your program?

One year

\*Is participation in your program voluntary by choice of the student/parent or is it mandated by the school system or outside agency?

There are 10 different programs

Most are voluntary

Disciplinary problems are usually mandated by judge or school board

Parents can call and request and go through an application process

\*Does a school counselor provide services to your program? If yes, what is the name of this counselor and how could they be contacted?

Yes we have school counselor

Works part-time

Dramatic change since counselor came on board

Very, Very crucial component

Reduce drop-out since she got here

\*Do you have any other information you would like to share that could further explain for what reasons students are placed in your program?

Have various programs students are involved with

Try to individualize services

Programs are designed to assist Behavior problems, getting a GED, getting a regular diploma, getting a graduation certificate, teen parents, TMR class, school to work issues, and personal care

\*Counselor Response

\*Describe your educational background and prior work experiences.

B.S. degree in business

M.S. Education and Vocational education

Masters for administration

\*Are the services that you provide to the alternative education program considered part-time or full-time services?

Part-time

Provide 2 blocks of 90 minutes each day

\*Do you work specifically with students in the alternative education program?

(If NO, "Describe the other populations you work with and what services you provide to them?")

Serve just alternative education students

\*What types of direct counseling services do you provide to the students in the alternative education program?

Most guidance in form of developing course work

No real counseling

\*Describe any administrative or program coordination (program planning, evaluation, and accountability) services you provide?

Assigned administrative designee

Do some discipline

Deal with parent issues

Teach 2 classes

Do testing

Coordinate SOL's

Arrange schedules

\*Do you feel the services you are currently providing are meeting the needs of the students you serve? (If NO, "What other services do you feel would be beneficial?")

Probably adequately

Not doing all that would like to

Other services could involve program to transition students into workplace

Would like to develop student portfolios

\*How are the services you provide linked to the community?

Services are linked to community very little

We are weak in this area

\*What type of training background or staff development have you had, or would you recommend to other counselors, that would assist in working with students in alternative education programs?

Need endorsed guidance counselor

\*Is there any other information you could provide that would help clarify the types of services you provide?

Have a student assistance program that comes in provides some counseling services to students

Student assistance programs come in once a week

Work with all high schools in area

Take each case on an individual basis

Develop an individualize plan for each student

### School Six

\*Administrator Response

\*What grade levels does your school serve?

Middle school through high school

\*Describe the reasons that students are placed in your alternative education program.

To catch up academically

This is not a behavior problem oriented program

Academic based program

Need services due to teen pregnancy

Student has job outside of school

Assist students in getting requirements to graduate

\*What is the typical length of time a student spends in your program?

Four hours per day

Depends on how many credit hours they need

Probably most stay for 1 semester

\*Is participation in your program voluntary by choice of the student/parent or is it mandated by the school system or outside agency?

It is voluntary

Open door policy

Parents and students must go through admission process

School has right to say no to application

\*Does a school counselor provide services to your program? If yes, what is the name of this counselor and how could they be contacted?

Yes we have school counselor

\*Do you have any other information you would like to share that could further explain for what reasons students are placed in your program?

\*Counselor Response

\*Describe your educational background and prior work experiences.

Math and Science background

Masters in Counselor Education

\*Are the services that you provide to the alternative education program considered part-time or full-time services?

Full time

\*Do you work specifically with students in the alternative education program?

(If NO, "Describe the other populations you work with and what services you provide to them?")

Serve just alternative education students

\*What types of direct counseling services do you provide to the students in the alternative education program?

Individual counseling

Group counseling

Career counseling

Job placement

Go to interviews with students

\*Describe any administrative or program coordination (program planning, evaluation, and accountability) services you provide?

Share administrative duties with 2 other people

Conduct intakes of students

Maintain records

Deal with some facility issues

Share discipline responsibilities

Work on attendance

Organize graduation

\*Do you feel the services you are currently providing are meeting the needs of the students you serve? (If NO, "What other services do you feel would be beneficial?")

Feel we are meeting the needs of our students right now

\*How are the services you provide linked to the community?

Use social services often

Use public mental health agencies for assistance

We do not do job shadowing or co-op now

\*What type of training background or staff development have you had, or would you recommend to other counselors, that would assist in working with students in alternative education programs?

Need to like children

Be flexible

Have some prior experience working with at risk students

Working in vocational field has helped

Get out from behind a desk of paper pushing

### School Seven

**\*Administrator Response**

**\*What grade levels does your school serve?**

Primarily 9-12 grades

Have one class serving grades k-5

**\*Describe the reasons that students are placed in your alternative education program.**

Reasons have changes

Numerous discipline problems

In some cases they have attendance problems

Disrespect to teachers

Consistently bothering other students

**\*What is the typical length of time a student spends in your program?**

Most have a chance to get out of program in 1 semester

About 12% earn way back to regular school after 1 semester

About 1 in 5 earn way back to regular school and GED by end of 1 year

**\*Is participation in your program voluntary by choice of the student/parent or is it mandated by the school system or outside agency?**

Mandated by other schools

Principals make request to alternative education committee

**\*Does a school counselor provide services to your program? If yes, what is the name of this counselor and how could they be contacted?**

Yes we have school counselor in our program

Part-time basis, 2 afternoons a week

**\*Do you have any other information you would like to share that could further explain for what reasons students are placed in your program?**

Students usually come here if experience more than one fight

Get students who don't take advice to listen

Get students who have problems conforming to expected standards

Any student that is expelled comes through this program for a minimum of 1 semester before transitioning back into regular school

**\*Counselor Response**

**\*Describe your educational background and prior work experiences.**

Worked in business and industry for 10 years

Masters in counseling from Maryland

**\*Are the services that you provide to the alternative education program considered part-time or full-time services?**

Part-time

Provide on call services

## Crisis management

\*Do you work specifically with students in the alternative education program?

(If NO, "Describe the other populations you work with and what services you provide to them?")

No I do not serve only alternative education students

Also serve regular middle school population

\*What types of direct counseling services do you provide to the students in the alternative education program?

Some group counseling

Anger management

Career counseling

Individual counseling

Job preparation training (filling out application and interview process)

Talk a lot with students about poor attitudes

\*Describe any administrative or program coordination (program planning, evaluation, and accountability) services you provide?

Don't have any real administrative duties

\*Do you feel the services you are currently providing are meeting the needs of the students you serve? (If NO, "What other services do you feel would be beneficial?")

No the services being offered are not meeting the needs of the students

Providing part-time does not allow enough time

Possibly implementing a program such as "Keys to Intervention" it is a 5 to 6 week program to assist students

\*How are the services you provide linked to the community?

Take students to the YMCA for exercise

Some teachers coordinate working with outside businesses

\*What type of training background or staff development have you had, or would you recommend to other counselors, that would assist in working with students in alternative education programs?

Behavior modification training is important

\*Is there any other information you could provide that would help clarify the types of services you provide?

Usually see students as needed on referral basis

## School Eight

### \*Administrator Response

\*What grade levels does your school serve?

Serve grades 7-12

\*Describe the reasons that students are placed in your alternative education program.

Received expulsion for drugs or weapons

Board has mandated placement

Court system has mandated placement

Students are having multiple behavior problems in their schools

\*What is the typical length of time a student spends in your program?

Most spend 1 semester

If situation involved a weapon they stay for 1 year

Average is 4 to 6 weeks

\*Is participation in your program voluntary by choice of the student/parent or is it mandated by the school system or outside agency?

Placement is mandated

Parents can refuse placement and student remains expelled

\*Does a school counselor provide services to your program? If yes, what is the name of this counselor and how could they be contacted?

Yes we have school counselor that serves our program

\*Do you have any other information you would like to share that could further explain for what reasons students are placed in your program?

Majority of students in program are due to repeated behavior problems

Serve some students at alternative classes at high school that were designed to assist before coming to full time alternative placement or to help transition back into regular school program

### \*Counselor Response

\*Describe your educational background and prior work experiences.

Licensed school psychologist

Education specialist degree

Previously a probation officer

\*Are the services that you provide to the alternative education program considered part-time or full-time services?

Full time

\*Do you work specifically with students in the alternative education program?

(If NO, "Describe the other populations you work with and what services you provide to them?")

Work specifically with alternative education students

Work at different sites

\*What types of direct counseling services do you provide to the students in the alternative education program?

Individual counseling

Group counseling

Lecture on selected topics

\*Describe any administrative or program coordination (program planning, evaluation, and accountability) services you provide?

Work as a team, Do not have any administrative duties per se

Do some testing and interest inventories

\*Do you feel the services you are currently providing are meeting the needs of the students you serve? (If NO, "What other services do you feel would be beneficial?")

Yes we are meeting needs of students

Helps students and staff to have a counselor on staff

\*How are the services you provide linked to the community?

Developed an incentive program to earn things

Earn chance to go out for pizza

Stores donate items to use as incentives for good behavior

Burger King provides breakfast sometimes

\*What type of training background or staff development have you had, or would you recommend to other counselors, that would assist in working with students in alternative education programs?

Should attend national conference on alternative education issues

Keep in touch with peers working in alternative education

Keep up to date on current issues like school violence

Learn about life skills programs

Get feedback from peers on in confidential manner

Become effective in team work

Learn a lot of prevention strategies

\*Is there any other information you could provide that would help clarify the types of services you provide?

Now serving to the maximum with staff available

It is not typical to keep students for long period of time, idea is to return them to regular school

Work with students that were referred for drug, weapon, truancy, or behavior problems

Offer some vocational training assistance

Important to keep number of students served low

### School Nine

\*Administrator Response

\*What grade levels does your school serve?

Serve grades 7-12

\*Describe the reasons that students are placed in your alternative education program.

Majority are behind a grade level

Age 17 and need more credits

Behavior reasons (suspensions)

Home situation (teen mothers)

\*What is the typical length of time a student spends in your program?

Generally here 1 semester

\*Is participation in your program voluntary by choice of the student/parent or is it mandated by the school system or outside agency?

Placement is both voluntary and mandated

\*Does a school counselor provide services to your program? If yes, what is the name of this counselor and how could they be contacted?

Yes we have school counselor that serves our program

\*Do you have any other information you would like to share that could further explain for what reasons students are placed in your program?

Students usually choose want to get GED

Night school is generally behavior problems

Also do a half-day program for at-risk students as prevention

\*Counselor Response

\*Describe your educational background and prior work experiences.

Masters in Guidance and Counseling

Worked at all 3 levels

Have been director of pupil services

\*Are the services that you provide to the alternative education program considered part-time or full-time services?

Full time

\*Do you work specifically with students in the alternative education program?

(If NO, "Describe the other populations you work with and what services you provide to them?")

Work specifically with alternative education students

\*What types of direct counseling services do you provide to the students in the alternative education program?

Individual counseling

Group counseling

Family counseling

\*Describe any administrative or program coordination (program planning, evaluation, and accountability) services you provide?

Next to principal in pecking order

Do all admissions (screening) parent interviews

Curriculum development

Created a guidance handbook explaining services

Discipline sometimes

\*Do you feel the services you are currently providing are meeting the needs of the students you serve? (If NO, "What other services do you feel would be beneficial?")

Always room for more

Would like for programs to reach more into the community

\*How are the services you provide linked to the community?

We help find mentors

Do a co-op program

Help find jobs after school for students

Work with health department, community services, churches (students do odd jobs)

\*What type of training background or staff development have you had, or would you recommend to other counselors, that would assist in working with students in alternative education programs?

Should be specialized course to learn about special programs that are available

Realize working with most challenging counseling needs students

Should have be strong knowledge of suicide prevention, coping skills, parent interactions skills, and family services

\*Is there any other information you could provide that would help clarify the types of services you provide?

It is important to have community awareness and know the services and supports available

Should have a course in being flexible and going with the flow

### School 10

\*Administrator Response

\*What grade levels does your school serve?

Serve grades 6-12

\*Describe the reasons that students are placed in your alternative education program.

Originally set up to assist students missing credits to graduate

Recently, has become a placement for expelled students

Majority of students are here because of drugs, threats, weapons offenses

Still some academic reasons

\*What is the typical length of time a student spends in your program?

Varies from case to case

Usually a semester

Some kids cannot deal with going back

\*Is participation in your program voluntary by choice of the student/parent or is it mandated by the school system or outside agency?

Some are mandated

Have some slots for recommended students

\*Does a school counselor provide services to your program? If yes, what is the name of this counselor and how could they be contacted?

Yes we have school counselor that serves our program

\*Do you have any other information you would like to share that could further explain for what reasons students are placed in your program?

Most referrals come from school board

Work closely with court system

Find out everybody's program is different

Biggest problem is building/facility issues

\*Counselor Response

\*Describe your educational background and prior work experiences.

Undergraduate child development psychology

Masters in Counselor Education

Endorsed in High School Counseling

Worked at Virginia Baptist Home

\*Are the services that you provide to the alternative education program considered part-time or full-time services?

Full time

\*Do you work specifically with students in the alternative education program?  
(If NO, "Describe the other populations you work with and what services you provide to them?")

Work specifically with alternative education students

\*What types of direct counseling services do you provide to the students in the alternative education program?

Individual counseling mostly  
Group counseling on all issues  
Career counseling  
Job search skills

\*Describe any administrative or program coordination (program planning, evaluation, and accountability) services you provide?

A little bit of everything  
Attendance  
Report Cards  
Scheduling  
GED requirements  
Administering standardized test

\*Do you feel the services you are currently providing are meeting the needs of the students you serve? (If NO, "What other services do you feel would be beneficial?")

Yes were are  
Work had to do that and work hard to meet all the needs

\*How are the services you provide linked to the community?

Linked to community counseling services  
Coordinate with business partners who come in and do mock interviews

\*What type of training background or staff development have you had, or would you recommend to other counselors, that would assist in working with students in alternative education programs?

Should be completely open minded  
Do a lot of counseling in this setting  
Be flexible

\*Is there any other information you could provide that would help clarify the types of services you provide?

I have an open door policy  
Student can come by and talk at anytime

### School 11

\*Administrator Response

\*What grade levels does your school serve?

Serve grades 9-12

\*Describe the reasons that students are placed in your alternative education program.

Lack of success in previous school

Have a hard time being successful in a big school

10-15% are due to discipline

about 85% apply to come here from home school

Are able to get into vocational programs

\*What is the typical length of time a student spends in your program?

Often hold on to until they graduate

They can opt to go back to home school, but most prefer to stay

\*Is participation in your program voluntary by choice of the student/parent or is it mandated by the school system or outside agency?

Students can apply

Some are result of disciplinary action taken by hearing officer

Apply at home school then go through interview process where parents come in to meet

\*Does a school counselor provide services to your program? If yes, what is the name of this counselor and how could they be contacted?

Yes we have school counselor that serves our program

\*Do you have any other information you would like to share that could further explain for what reasons students are placed in your program?

We have a small personal environment

Feel I need 2 or 3 counselors

Also have social workers attached to program

Very flexible in scheduling

Students have poor attendance

\*Counselor Response

\*Describe your educational background and prior work experiences.

Undergraduate child development psychology

Have Masters in Marketing

MA certification in guidance and counseling

Reality Therapy certification

\*Are the services that you provide to the alternative education program considered part-time or full-time services?

Full time

\*Do you work specifically with students in the alternative education program?

(If NO, "Describe the other populations you work with and what services you provide to them?")

Work specifically with alternative education students

\*What types of direct counseling services do you provide to the students in the alternative education program?

Individual counseling

Group counseling

Career counseling

Crisis counseling

Parent consultation

Pregnant mothers group

Testing

Parent/child conferences

\*Describe any administrative or program coordination (program planning, evaluation, and accountability) services you provide?

Master scheduling for all students

Test coordinator

Student Assistance Team chair

Child Study Team Chair

Organizing college applications and scholarships

\*Do you feel the services you are currently providing are meeting the needs of the students you serve? (If NO, "What other services do you feel would be beneficial?")

No

Need additional staff

Alcohol and Drug groups

Assistance from outside agency

\*How are the services you provide linked to the community?

Parent program through local city services

Conduct parent nights where we have cookouts and activities

Have a vo-tech program with community

Work through local mental health services

\*What type of training background or staff development have you had, or would you recommend to other counselors, that would assist in working with students in alternative education programs?

Go to lots of workshops

Be familiar with sexual abuse

Coursework in reality therapy

Experience working with anger groups  
Develop good mediation skills

\*Is there any other information you could provide that would help clarify the types of services you provide?

## School 12

### \*Administrator Response

\*What grade levels does your school serve?

Serve grades 7-12

\*Describe the reasons that students are placed in your alternative education program.

At risk of expulsion

Failing academically

Some truancy issues

Recommended for expulsion by school board

\*What is the typical length of time a student spends in your program?

Very individualized

Usually minimum of 1 semester

\*Is participation in your program voluntary by choice of the student/parent or is it mandated by the school system or outside agency?

School board placement

Voluntary through home school referral

\*Does a school counselor provide services to your program? If yes, what is the name of this counselor and how could they be contacted?

Yes we have school counselor that serves our program

Has been converted to assistant principal

\*Do you have any other information you would like to share that could further explain for what reasons students are placed in your program?

Mission is to reduce expelled students

Help reduce dropouts

### \*Counselor Response

\*Describe your educational background and prior work experiences.

Undergraduate child development psychology

Masters and license in Social Work

Working on Ph.D. in Elementary Ed.

\*Are the services that you provide to the alternative education program considered part-time or full-time services?

Full time

\*Do you work specifically with students in the alternative education program?  
(If NO, "Describe the other populations you work with and what services you provide to them?")

Work specifically with alternative education students

\*What types of direct counseling services do you provide to the students in the alternative education program?

See some individual

Work with substance, abuse, and home conflict issues

See students primarily related to discipline

Try to develop proactive programs

\*Describe any administrative or program coordination (program planning, evaluation, and accountability) services you provide?

Act as assistant principal

Manage discipline

IEP meetings

Lots of paper work

Work with faculty to educate about discipline

\*Do you feel the services you are currently providing are meeting the needs of the students you serve? (If NO, "What other services do you feel would be beneficial?")

No

Wish could provide more services

Social services component with home situation would be nice

Community resource officer addition would be good

\*How are the services you provide linked to the community?

Have a close relationship with courts and social services

Practice employment with businesses

\*What type of training background or staff development have you had, or would you recommend to other counselors, that would assist in working with students in alternative education programs?

Understand developmental and attachment issues

Case work experience

See students in context of where they are

\*Is there any other information you could provide that would help clarify the types of services you provide?

Good to mix counseling with discipline

Recently started vocational program

### School 13

\*Administrator Response

\*What grade levels does your school serve?

Primarily 7-9

\*Describe the reasons that students are placed in your alternative education program.

Continous defiance

Fighting

Continual disruption in their home school

\*What is the typical length of time a student spends in your program?

Basically 1 semester

\*Is participation in your program voluntary by choice of the student/parent or is it mandated by the school system or outside agency?

Recommended by building principals

Review by alternative school for acceptance

No set criteria for acceptance

Review how school dealt with situation

\*Does a school counselor provide services to your program? If yes, what is the name of this counselor and how could they be contacted?

Yes and she is full time

\*Do you have any other information you would like to share that could further explain for what reasons students are placed in your program?

\*Counselor Response

\*Describe your educational background and prior work experiences.

School counselor in New York

Was guidance director

Masters in counseling development

\*Are the services that you provide to the alternative education program considered part-time or full-time services?

Full time

\*Do you work specifically with students in the alternative education program?

(If NO, "Describe the other populations you work with and what services you provide to them?")

Work specifically with alternative education students

\*What types of direct counseling services do you provide to the students in the alternative education program?

Individual when needed

Group counseling

Art therapy program

Alternative behavior program (social skills)

\*Describe any administrative or program coordination (program planning, evaluation, and accountability) services you provide?

Testing (SOL's)

Scheduling

Admissions

\*Do you feel the services you are currently providing are meeting the needs of the students you serve? (If NO, "What other services do you feel would be beneficial?")

No

Need more counselors

Cannot always do as much individually

Be better if not tied up with other duties

\*How are the services you provide linked to the community?

Use community services for outside counseling

Develop career days where speakers come in

Coordinate some with businesses

\*What type of training background or staff development have you had, or would you recommend to other counselors, that would assist in working with students in alternative education programs?

Important to keep in contact with different counseling methods

Volunteer at facilities

Emphasis on counseling techniques

Keep fresh with new issues

\*Is there any other information you could provide that would help clarify the types of services you provide?

Biggest challenging is overcoming perception alternative education is a dumping ground

Have a growing population of special education students

### School 14

**\*Administrator Response**

**\*What grade levels does your school serve?**

Primarily Children to senior citizens

**\*Describe the reasons that students are placed in your alternative education program.**

Some behavior reasons

Teen pregnancy

Those seeking to complete a GED

Vocational interest

Attendance problems

Overage for grade

Head start program for preschool

**\*What is the typical length of time a student spends in your program?**

Large percentage stay a full school year

Trying to get diploma

**\*Is participation in your program voluntary by choice of the student/parent or is it mandated by the school system or outside agency?**

Mandated by a hearing officer

Also voluntary

**\*Does a school counselor provide services to your program? If yes, what is the name of this counselor and how could they be contacted?**

Yes

Have 3 school counselors

Do a variety of tasks

Very big need

Provide transitional services

**\*Do you have any other information you would like to share that could further explain for what reasons students are placed in your program?**

Were given own social worker for site

Do not have a school psychologist

**\*Counselor Response**

**\*Describe your educational background and prior work experiences.**

MA in Guidance and Counseling

Licensed Professional Counselor

Guidance director

\*Are the services that you provide to the alternative education program considered part-time or full-time services?

Full time

\*Do you work specifically with students in the alternative education program?

(If NO, "Describe the other populations you work with and what services you provide to them?")

Yes, any youth in our building

\*What types of direct counseling services do you provide to the students in the alternative education program?

Academic counseling

Career counseling

Self-esteem building

mediator

\*Describe any administrative or program coordination (program planning, evaluation, and accountability) services you provide?

Coordinate month guidance meetings

Liaison with other schools

Sometimes hand school board cases

Distribute information to others in school

Oversee testing programs

\*Do you feel the services you are currently providing are meeting the needs of the students you serve? (If NO, "What other services do you feel would be beneficial?")

Within our setting we do meet need but overall...NO

No

So self-comprehensive we set ourselves up not to meet all the needs

More people have need than we can meet

Need more space

Unlimited daycare services

Preschool program

\*How are the services you provide linked to the community?

Have advisory at school to address linking services to community

Work with local university

Do mentoring through community

Business and community leaders do job training

\*What type of training background or staff development have you had, or would you recommend to other counselors, that would assist in working with students in alternative education programs?

Need a practicum in alternative setting

Need to love working with these at-risk kids

Volunteer to work in setting like this

\*Is there any other information you could provide that would help clarify the types of services you provide?

Serve babies through senior citizens

Have a day and night program

Offer satellite programs

Offer computer classes

Training in food services

Vocational classes are offered

Have an ESL program

### School 15

\*Administrator Response

\*What grade levels does your school serve?

Serve grades 9-12

\*Describe the reasons that students are placed in your alternative education program.

Pregnant and parenting teens

ESL at any age

Adults coming back to get diploma

10% are referred by school board due to problems in school which could involve fighting or attendance

\*What is the typical length of time a student spends in your program?

Most spend 1 semester

It really varies

\*Is participation in your program voluntary by choice of the student/parent or is it mandated by the school system or outside agency?

It depends

Some cases are mandated

Most come by own choice

If over 18, can come in sign up

\*Does a school counselor provide services to your program? If yes, what is the name of this counselor and how could they be contacted?

Yes

\*Do you have any other information you would like to share that could further explain for what reasons students are placed in your program?

Sometimes health related issues

\*Counselor Response

\*Describe your educational background and prior work experiences.

Masters in counseling and human development

\*Are the services that you provide to the alternative education program considered part-time or full-time services?

Full time

\*Do you work specifically with students in the alternative education program?

(If NO, "Describe the other populations you work with and what services you provide to them?")

Yes

\*What types of direct counseling services do you provide to the students in the alternative education program?

Problems solving

Career planning

Goal Setting

Individual counseling

Cultural adjustments

\*Describe any administrative or program coordination (program planning, evaluation, and accountability) services you provide?

Test taking

Creating student lists

Scheduling

No discipline

\*Do you feel the services you are currently providing are meeting the needs of the students you serve? (If NO, "What other services do you feel would be beneficial?")

Right now feel good about what we do

Have lots of supports such as psychologist

\*How are the services you provide linked to the community?

Several partnerships with businesses

Mentorship programs

Work with local university

\*What type of training background or staff development have you had, or would you recommend to other counselors, that would assist in working with students in alternative education programs?

Gain a lot of clinical knowledge

Be knowledgeable of school law

Be knowledgeable of special education law

\*Is there any other information you could provide that would help clarify the types of services you provide?

Services are ongoing

Try to respond to the individual as much as possible

## Appendix K

### Reasons for Participation/Behavior

Node (2 1)

\*\*\* Definition:

Behavioral reasons for placement in alternative education programs

#### School-2

Some type of reportable offense

8th graders mainly are disciplinary referrals

Can be discipline

#### School-3

Referred for problems with the law

Referred for disciplinary reasons

#### School-4

Disciplinary problems

#### School-5

Wide range

Expelled students

Probably most are behavior problems

#### School-7

Numerous discipline problems

Disrespect to teachers

Consistently bothering other students

#### School-8

Received expulsion for drugs or weapons

Board has mandated placement

Court system has mandated placement

Students are having multiple behavior problems in their schools

#### School-9

Behavior reasons (suspensions)

#### School-10

Recently, has become a placement for expelled students

Majority of students are here because of drugs, threats, weapons offenses

#### School-11

10-15% are due to discipline

#### School-12

At risk of expulsion

Recommended for expulsion by school board

#### School-13

Continous defiance

Fighting

Continual disruption in their home school

#### School-14

Some behavior reasons

#### School-15

10% are referred by school board due to problems in school which could involve fighting or attendance

## Appendix L

### Reasons for Participation/Academic

Node (2 2)

\*\*\* Definition:

Academic reasons for placement in alternative education programs

#### School-1

Because they are not successful academically

Not passing SOL's

Failed 1 or 2 grades

Purely academic reasons

#### School-3

Referred for academic problems

#### School-4

Failure of 2 or more classes

Would like to say program is educational or vocational but that is not the case

#### School-5

Behind in grade levels

#### School-6

To catch up academically

This is not a behavior problem oriented program

Academic based program

Assist students in getting requirements to graduate

#### School-9

Majority are behind a grade level

Age 17 and need more credits

#### School-10

Originally set up to assist students missing credits to graduate

Still some academic reasons

#### School-11

Are able to get into vocational programs

#### School-12

Failing academically

#### School-14

Those seeking to complete a GED

Vocational interest

Overage for grade

Head start program for preschool

#### School-15

Adults coming back to get diploma

## Appendix M

### Reasons for Participation/Other

Node (2 3)

\*\*\* Definition:

Other reasons besides behavior and academic for placement in alternative programs (truancy, health, family issues, jobs, etc)

#### School-2

Teen parent, other medical issues

#### School-3

Referred for truancy

#### School-4

Chronic absenteeism

#### School-5

Teen parents

Truancy problems

TMR class

Basically for one reason or another student has not been able to function in regular school setting

#### School-6

Need services due to teen pregnancy

Student has job outside of school

#### School-7

In some cases they have attendance problems

Get students who have problems conforming to expected standards

#### School-9

Home situation (teen mothers)

#### School-12

Some truancy issues

#### School-14

Teen pregnancy

Attendance problems

#### School-15

Pregnant and parenting teens

ESL at any age

## Appendix N

### Category of Non-Licensed School Counselor Responses

#### Counselor's Role/Non-Licensed School Counselor/Time

Node (1 2 1)

\*\*\* Definition:

Full time or part time services provided to students in alternative program

#### **School-5**

Part-time

Provide 2 blocks of 90 minutes each day

Serve just alternative education students

#### **School-8**

Full time

Work specifically with alternative education students

Work at different sites

#### **School-12**

Full Time

Work specifically with alternative education students

#### Counselor's Role/Non-Licensed School Counselor/Education

Node (1 2 2)

\*\*\* Definition:

Education level of counselor

#### **School-5**

M.S. Education and Vocational education

Masters for administration

#### **School-8**

Licensed school psychologist

Education specialist degree

#### **School-12**

Masters and license in Social Work

Working on Ph.D. in Elementary Ed.

#### Counselor's Role/Non-Licensed School Counselor/Needs

Node (1 2 3)

\*\*\* Definition:

Are current counseling services meeting the needs of students

#### **School-5**

Probably adequately

Not doing all that would like to

Other services could involve program to transition students into workplace

Would like to develop student portfolios

#### **School-8**

Yes we are meeting needs of students

Helps students and staff to have a counselor on staff

**School-12**

No

Wish could provide more services

Social services component with home situation would be nice

Community resource officer addition would be good

*Counselor's Role/Non-Licensed School Counselor/Direct Counseling*

Node (1 2 4) /

\*\*\* Definition:

Direct counseling services provided to students

**School-5**

Most guidance in form of developing course work

No real counseling

**School-8**

Individual counseling

Group counseling

Lecture on selected topics

**School-12**

See some individual

Work with substance, abuse, and home conflict issues

See students primarily related to discipline

Try to develop proactive programs

*Counselor's Role/Non-Licensed School Counselor/Administrative and Coordination*

Duties

Node (1 2 5)

\*\*\* Definition:

Administrative and program coordination duties performed by counselor

**School-5**

Assigned administrative designee

Do some discipline

Deal with parent issues

Teach 2 classes

Do testing

Coordinate SOL's

Arrange schedules

**School-8**

Work as a team

Do not have any administrative duties per se

Do some testing and interest inventories

**School-12**

Act as assistant principal

Manage discipline

IEP meetings

Lots of paper work

Work with faculty to educate about discipline

Counselors/Non-Licensed School Counselor/Community Involvement

Node (1 2 6)

\*\*\* Definition:

How are counseling services linked to the community?

**School-5**

Services are linked to community very little

We are weak in this area

**School-8**

Developed an incentive program to earn things

Earn chance to go out for pizza

Stores donate items to use as incentives for good behavior

Burger King provides breakfast sometimes

**School-12**

Have a close relationship with courts and social services

Practice employment with businesses

## Appendix O

### Time At Site

#### *Counselor's Role/Licensed School Counselor/Time*

Node (1 1 1)

\*\*Definition:

Does school counselor work full-time or part-time with students in alternative program?

#### **School-1**

Part-time services

2 days a week

Do not work specifically with alternative education students

Work with regular education middle school 3 days a week

#### **School-2**

Part-time

Strictly with alternative education students

#### **School-3**

Provide full time services

Exclusively with alternative education students now

#### **School-4**

Provide part-time services

Need a full time counselor

I work with students that are outside of alternative education also

#### **School-6**

Full time

Serve just alternative education students

#### **School-7**

Part-time, Provide on call services

Also serve regular middle school population

#### **School-9**

Full time

Work specifically with alternative education students

#### **School-10**

Full time

Work specifically with alternative education

Student can come by and talk at any time

#### **School-11**

Full

Work specifically with alternative education students

#### **School-13**

Full time

Work specifically with alternative education

#### **School-14**

Full time

Work with any youth in our building

#### **School-15**

Full Time

## Appendix P

### Educational Level

#### Counselor's Role/Licensed School Counselor/Education

Node (1 1 2)

\*\*Definition

Education level of school counselor

#### **School-1**

Have a Masters in Counseling (60 hours)

#### **School-2**

Masters in School Counseling

#### **School-3**

20 years of pastoral counseling

Have a masters in psychology

Endorsed in secondary guidance

#### **School-4**

Undergraduate in psychology

Masters in guidance and counseling

#### **School-6**

Math and Science background

Masters in Counselor Education

#### **School-7**

Masters in counseling from Maryland

#### **School-9**

Masters in Guidance and Counseling

#### **School-10**

Masters in Counselor Education

Endorsed in High School Counseling

#### **School-11**

MA certification in guidance and counseling

Reality Therapy certification

#### **School-13**

Masters in counseling development

#### **School-14**

MA in Guidance and Counseling

Licensed Professional Counselor

#### **School-15**

Masters in counseling and human development

## Appendix Q

### Meeting Needs of Students

#### Counselor's Role/Licensed School Counselor/Needs

Node (1 1 3)

\*\*\* Definition:

Are current school counselor services meeting the needs of students?

#### School-1

Are providing satisfactory services now

Could always be doing more

Would help to add parents group to get parents involved

Would help to develop ADHD groups for students and parents

#### School-2

Not really meeting needs of students

Tapping them and doing more now than we were

Another counselor on staff would help

Community services provide a counselor to come in and assist with groups and counseling

#### School-3

Probably not meeting need of this population

Need more people to help out

Could use assistance from outside programs in community or colleges

#### School-4

Meeting the needs of students on a limited basis

With additional assistance could do more

Once staff is in place we can put some good programs in

Difficult to do one thing well when doing so many other things

#### School-6

Feel we are meeting the needs of our students right now

#### School-7

No the services being offered are not meeting the needs of the students

Providing part-time does not allow enough time

#### School-9

Always room for more

Would like for programs to reach more into the community

#### School-10

Yes were are

Work had to do that and work hard to meet all the needs

#### School-11

No

Need additional staff, alcohol and drug groups, assistance from outside agency

#### School-13

No

Need more counselors, cannot always do as much individually

Be better if not tied up with other duties

**School-14**

Within our setting we do meet need but overall  
So self-comprehensive we set ourselves up not to meet all the needs  
More people have need than we can meet  
Need more space, unlimited daycare services, preschool program

**School-15**

Right now feel good about what we do  
Have lots of supports

## Appendix R

### Direct Counseling Duties

#### Counselor's Role/Licensed School Counselor/Direct Counseling

Node (1 1 4)

\*\*\* Definition:

Direct counseling services provided to students

#### **School-1**

Provide limited direct counseling

Crisis intervention

Individual counseling

Group mediation

Peer problems

Attendance problems

Do not do as much group counseling as would like to

#### **School-2**

Individual counseling

Group Counseling

Behavior Management

Social skills group

Anger management groups

Academic counseling

#### **School-3**

Mostly provide services on crisis basis

Run anger groups

Used to be able to be more of a counselor

#### **School-4**

Career exploration

Small group counseling

Individual counseling as needed

#### **School-6**

Individual counseling

Group counseling

Career counseling

Job placement

Go to interviews with students

#### **School-7**

Some group counseling

Anger management

Career counseling

Individual counseling

Job preparation training (filling out application and interview process)

Talk a lot with students about poor attitudes

Usually see students as needed on referral basis

#### **School-9**

Individual counseling

Group counseling

Family counseling

**School-10**

Individual counseling mostly

Group counseling on all issues

Career counseling

Job search skills

**School-11**

Individual counseling

Group counseling

Career counseling

Crisis counseling

Parent consultation

Pregnant mothers group

Testing

Parent/child conferences

**School-13**

Individual when needed

Group counseling

Art therapy program

Alternative behavior program (social skills)

**School-14**

Academic counseling

Career counseling

Self-esteem building

Mediator

**School-15**

Problems solving

Career planning

Goal Setting

Individual counseling

Cultural adjustments

## Appendix S

### Administrative or Program Coordination Duties

#### Counselor's Role/Licensed School Counselor/Administrative and Coordination Duties

Node (1 1 5)

\*\*\* Definition:

Administrative and program coordination duties performed by school counselor

#### **School-1**

Scheduling

Paper work for GED and SOL

Test administration

Organize internships for students

#### **School-2**

Pinch hit if administrator is not there to meet with parents

Enrollment of students

#### **School-3**

Plan career days

Testing coordination

Sometimes views as assistant principal

Head child study teams

#### **School-4**

Assume principal duties at this time

Bring in guest speakers

Make outside contacts

Establish a mentoring program

Contacting community resources

#### **School-6**

Share administrative duties with 2 other people

Conduct intakes of students

Maintain records

Deal with some facility issues

Share discipline responsibilities

Work on attendance

Organize graduation

#### **School-7**

Don't have any real administrative duties

#### **School-9**

Next to principal in pecking order

Do all admissions (screening) parent interviews

Curriculum development

Created a guidance handbook explaining services

Discipline sometimes

#### **School-10**

A little bit of everything

Attendance

Report Cards

Scheduling

GED requirements

Administering standardized test

**School-11**

Master scheduling for all students

Test coordinator

Student Assistance Team chair

Child Study Team Chair

Organizing college applications and scholarships

**School-13**

Testing (SOL's)

Scheduling

Admissions

**School-14**

Coordinate month guidance meetings

Liaison with other schools

Sometimes hand school board cases

Distribute information to others in school

Oversee testing programs

**School-15**

Test taking

Creating student lists

Scheduling

No discipline

## Appendix T

### Community Involvement of Services

#### Counselor's Role/Licensed School Counselor/Community Involvement

Node (1 1 6)

\*\*\* Definition:

How are counseling services linked to the community?

#### **School-1**

Shadowing to local businesses

Learning environment is community based

Take students to local elementary school to assist programs there

#### **School-2**

Provide job placements

Invite businesses to come in and speak

Take students to local colleges sometimes

#### **School-3**

Linked some students up with a local bank

Don't really have any links now

Have done teen outreach programs to retirement homes

Family services comes in sometimes

University has provided some practicum students

#### **School-4**

Currently working with county prevention board

Boys Scouts to provide mentoring

#### **School-6**

Use social services often

Use public mental health agencies for assistance

We do not do job shadowing or co-op now

#### **School-7**

Take students to the YMCA for exercise

Some teachers coordinate working with outside businesses

#### **School-9**

We help find mentors

Do a co-op program

Help find jobs after school for students

Work with health department, community services, churches (students do odd jobs)

#### **School-10**

Linked to community counseling services

Coordinate with business partners who come in and do mock interviews

#### **School-11**

Parent program through local city services

Conduct parent nights where we have cookouts and activities

Have a vo-tech program with community

Work through local mental health services

**School-13**

Use community services for outside counseling  
Develop career days where speakers come in  
Coordinate some with businesses

**School-14**

Have advisory at school to address linking services to community  
Work with local university  
Do mentoring through community  
Business and community leaders do job training

**School-15**

Several partnerships with businesses  
Mentorship programs  
Work with local university

## Appendix U

### Future Training Recommendations

#### Future Training/Classes

Node (3 1)

\*\*\* Definition:

Suggested classes or areas of course work that could be taken to better prepare new school counselors wanting to work in alternative education programs

#### **School-1**

Do community based observations

Do practicums with at risk students

#### **School-2**

A good internship placement

Volunteer with community programs that work with at risk students

Be involved in school programs that work with at risk students

#### **School-4**

Have a background in psychology

Take behavior management classes

Anger management training

Conflict resolution training

#### **School-5**

Need endorsed guidance counselor

#### **School-7**

Behavior modification training is important

#### **School-8**

Should attend national conference on alternative education issues

Learn a lot of prevention strategies

#### **School-9**

Specialized course to learn about special programs that are available

Should have strong knowledge of suicide prevention, coping skills, parent interactions skills, and family services

#### **School-11**

Go to lots of workshops

Be familiar with sexual abuse

Coursework in reality therapy

Experience working with anger groups

#### **School-12**

Understand developmental and attachment issues

Case work experience

#### **School-13**

Volunteer at facilities

Emphasis on counseling techniques

#### **School-14**

Need a practicum in alternative setting

#### **School-15**

Gain a lot of clinical knowledge

Be knowledgeable of school law

Be knowledgeable of special education law

Future Training/Recommended Skills

Node (3 2)

\*\*\* Definition:

Suggested skills and work experiences that would help school counselors be better prepared to work with alternative programs

**School-1**

Have awareness of community resources

Learn to identify problems earlier

Look at Boys and Girls clubs

**School-3**

Have a background similar to the students you work with

Show students you have a sense of humor

Show students you have compassion

Interact with students a lot

**School-4**

Have patience and do not personalize things

**School-6**

Need to like children

Be flexible

Have some prior experience working with at risk students

Working in vocational field has helped

Get out from behind a desk of paper pushing

**School-8**

Keep in touch with peers working in alternative education

Keep up to date on current issues like school violence

Learn about life skills programs

Get feedback from peers on in confidential manner

Become effective in team work

**School-9**

Realize working with most challenging counseling needs students

It is important to have community awareness and know the services and supports available

Should have a course in being flexible and going with the flow

**School-10**

Should be completely open minded

Do a lot of counseling in this setting

Be flexible

**School-11**

Develop good mediation skills

**School-12**

See students in context of where they are

**School-13**

Important to keep in contact with different counseling methods

Keep fresh with new issues

**School-14**

Need to love working with these at-risk kids  
Volunteer to work in setting like this

**School-15**

Gain a lot of clinical knowledge  
Be knowledgeable of school law  
Be knowledgeable of special education law

## Vita

Darryl Dallas Helems  
3425 Kenwick Trail  
Roanoke, VA 24018

### **Education:**

Ph.D. Candidate, Counselor Education, Virginia Tech: Blacksburg, VA.  
Dissertation Topic: The School Counselor's Role In Alternative Education  
Defending Date: June 19, 2001

Ed.S., School Psychology, James Madison University: Harrisonburg, VA

M.A., School Psychology, James Madison University: Harrisonburg, VA

B.S., Major: Psychology - Minor: Special Education, James Madison University:  
Harrisonburg, VA

### **Employment:**

1991 – Present : School Psychologist, Franklin County Schools: Rocky Mount, VA  
Duties: Conducting psycho-educational evaluations, individual counseling, group counseling, peer mediation coordinator, member of child study team and special education eligibility committee, chair manifestation determination committee for middle school, conduct functional behavioral assessments

September 1999- May 2000: Graduate Assistant, Counselor Education Department,  
Virginia Tech: Blacksburg, VA  
Duties: Assist in preparing for CACREP accreditation review, assist professors in class preparation, various office tasks

### **Personal:**

Darryl is currently married to Denise Helems who works as a teacher for Roanoke County Schools. He was born and raised in Craig County and his parents still reside there. He has recently accepted a new school psychologist position working for Salem City School where he will begin work in August, 2001. Darryl enjoys playing golf, volleyball, snow skiing. He also enjoys outdoor activities that involve hiking and landscaping.