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Benchmark Comprehensive Assignment

Counseling Children and Adolescents in Schools

Liberty University

Component #1: Developmental Considerations in Counseling

Larissa is experiencing developmental factors that are typical for early adolescence. She is at an age where she is beginning to pursue autonomy and independence from her parents. At this stage of development Larissa is experiencing the pressure of conforming to those around her. She is trying to fit in with the image that she is just like everyone else. This is likely why she is resisting bringing her friends around her family who speak mainly Spanish because this contradicts her similarities with her friends. Additionally, family is of utmost importance in Hispanic culture. Vernon and Schimmel explain, "Children may refer to the weekly family meal or *la comida seminal* as a time when families join together and bond" (2019, p. 316). As a school counselor dealing with Larissa's case I would take both these factors into consideration. I would encourage Larissa to understand why her parents are reacting this way. Therefore, Larissa could potentially discuss with her parents to attend the meal on one day and then go with her friends the next day on the weekend. I would like to meet with the parents and discuss with them the developmental factors that Larissa is experiencing utilizing visual aids and/or a translator to aid in communication.

One major change during early childhood is the change into an egocentric perspective (Vernon and Schimmel, 2019). The preschool age child views themselves from a high standard. Second, at this stage children develop greater self control. They can begin to appropriately respond and react. Lastly, their cognitive development shifts to more preoperational thinking (Vernon and Schimmel, 2019). They are able to understand concepts beyond the present time. In middle childhood, the child's social development develops into prosocial behavior (Vernon and Schimmel, 2019). This means that they improve their social relationships by seeing beyond themselves. Cognitively, children in this stage develop into concrete operational thinkers, making

them more advanced in logical situations and problem solving. Emotionally, children in middle childhood can better understand their own emotions as well as the people around them. They begin to realize that a peer can be excited and nervous, having two emotions simultaneously. Children go through numerous changes in early adolescence. An important change to understand is the desire to be independent and find their own identity apart from their family. This continues into social development, where children care deeply about being accepted by their peers and will conform however they need to in order to fit in. Cognitively, a significant change occurs as they begin to develop into formal operational thinkers. There can be a disconnect between the thinking they apply to some logical situations and others where they may fail to think logically, as the shift is a gradual development (Vernon and Schimmel, 2019). Self development in mid-adolescence involves a desire to discover who they are and their identity. They are more focused on themselves than what their peers may think. This can impact their emotional development, as they may experience depression. Vernon and Schimmel explain, "As their needs and interests change, they may be gradually growing apart from their friends" (2019, p. 25). Lastly, formal operational thinking continues to grow and mid-adolescence begin to theorize and venture into other realms of thinking i.e. moral, political and social topics (Vernon and Schimmel, 2019).

Resilience is the ability and skills to cope with hardships and trauma. Three of these traits that I am going to focus on are grit, self-regulation and proactive orientation. With these traits a child who has endured hardships through resilience can be successful academically, socially and developmentally. Grit and endurance impact the core SEL competency of self-management. If a child can manage their feelings and continue to endure in order to succeed they are self-managing. Likewise, proactive-orientation includes having a positive sense of self (Vernon

and Schimmel, 2019). With a positive sense of self comes appropriate relationship skills. Individuals can be confident in who they are without having to rely on others. Self-regulation aids an individual in making responsible decisions because they are able to control immediate gratification.

Component #2: Individual Counseling Process

To begin the individual counseling process it's important to establish rapport and build trust with the client. The focus for the first session would be facilitating this relationship. Nancy may have some resistance because of her situation and time spent in foster care. I would try to connect with Nancy on a personal level by asking her about things she likes to do, engaging in fun activities with her, and having meaningful conversations and showing interest in her life. Intake and assessment are essential in the individual counseling process and begins as soon as you obtain information on the client. The counselor looks over all information that would be pertinent to understand the client. Vernon and Schimmel explain, "Generally speaking, when assessing problems, counselors must take into account the clients' age, developmental abilities, culture, and context" (2019, p. 52). School counselors will work with teachers or parents to learn more about the situation. Parents need to sign a release of information if the school counselor is going to be communicating with other members involved. Depending on who referred Nancy, the counselor can ask Nancy for more information or the adult who referred her. As the school counselor, I would try and implement the HELPING model (Keat & Gurney, 1980). I would use this model because it covers several bases and can help me gather a larger picture of the experiences and emotions that Nancy is going through. After meeting with Nancy regularly, the next stage is to work towards implementing an intervention to target Nancy's goals. All the while, the school counselor is keeping in mind cultural and developmental considerations, time

constraints, and the counselor/client's abilities (Vernon and Schimmel, 2019). Lastly, the sessions will end with terminatiation or referrals. If the counselor has determined that the sessions have been effective and goals have been met, the counselor will begin the termination process. If the counselor has determined that Nancy's needs are beyond the counselor's skills, a referral to a more specialized service may take place. A resource that Nancy could potentially benefit from would be a mentorship program or youth program where she establishes supportive relationships outside of her new home. Small groups with other children who are transitioning from foster care to a new home would benefit Nancy because she could connect with others who understand her struggles. Nancy's parents could get her involved in a sport or activity that she enjoys that she could participate in without her siblings.

The counselor would need to assess where the individual falls on the spectrum of development, in order to explain the counseling process to them. For a younger individual the counselor could describe the process as follows: "A time where we can talk about the good things and bad things in our life. Then we can try to figure out how to get through the bad things so we can be happy more often." Explain that you are a trusted person who they can share whatever burdens they have in their life and that you will do everything you can to walk them through their personal difficulties. When explaining counseling to an individual from another culture, it is important to understand their perception of counseling through their eyes. In some cultures, counseling is looked down upon. These are the types of views to consider. If their first language is different from your own, you could use visual aids or if necessary, a translator. It's important to explain counseling to the students so you start off on the right foot with the same intentions and goals of working towards solutions with the students. If the student does not understand, they may be resistant to participate. ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors

state it is the responsibility of the school counselor to, “Inform students of the purposes, goals, techniques, rules and procedures under which they may receive counseling. Disclosure includes informed consent and clarification of the limits of confidentiality” (ASCA, 2016).

Terminating the counseling process with children and adolescents can be difficult because the child may associate the end of the experience with other negative experiences where a relationship ended. The process should be treated with great care with every individual. The counselor should make it known that they will still be available if the child wants to visit or discuss with the school counselor again. The counselor should make sure to address termination in advance and not suddenly on the last session. The student should be aware that they are making progress and may soon no longer need to be meeting with the counselor. It is advised to have the child express how they feel about the counseling process ending (Henderson, 1987). The counselor should focus on accomplishments and skills that the student learned during the process. Explain to the student that they are well prepared to be successful and deal with challenges on their own. Make sure that the student has discussed all concerns that they may have before the end of the termination session (Henderson, 1987). Lastly, give the student every opportunity to work through emotions by using play therapy, role playing, drawings, and other activities to draw awareness to their feelings (Henderson, 1987).

Example of an Informed Consent Form

CACHE COUNTY
SCHOOL DISTRICT

School Counseling Consent Form

Cache County School District school counselors offer short-term individual counseling to students, as well as small group counseling. Skill areas that may be addressed in these settings include: Friendship and Social Skills; Dealing with Anger, Anxiety, Sadness or Loss; Learning Self Control; Improving Self Esteem; Leadership Skills; and Making Responsible Choices.

Parents/guardians or school staff may refer students for counseling, or students may request counseling for themselves. School Counseling services are short-term services aimed at the more effective education and socialization of a child within the school community. These services are **not** intended as a substitute for diagnosis or treatment for any mental health disorder.

To build trust with the student, the school counselor will keep information confidential, with some exceptions. Because these services are provided to minor children in the school setting, the school counselor may share information with parents/guardians, the child's teacher, and/or administrators or school personnel who work with the child on a need to know basis, so that they may better assist the child as a team. The counselor is also required by law to share information with parents or others in the event the child is in danger of harm to self or others. The counselor will make the child aware, in an age appropriate manner, of these limits to confidentiality and will inform the child when sharing information with others.

"Utah Family Rights and Privacy Act (UFERPA) requires consent from a parent/legal guardian to offer individual or group counseling services. Utah law requires a two-week waiting period prior to participation in a counseling setting. With consent this waiting period may be waived. If information of a life-threatening nature is brought up it will be shared with the parent(s) and appropriate personnel. State law requires that information suggestive of child abuse be reported to the appropriate agency. Information from individual or group sessions may be shared with administration or teachers to benefit student success."

☐ **Mentor/Student Interaction**

☐ **Individual Counseling Session(s)**

☐ **Group Counseling Session(s)**

☐ **___ Option 1: I give consent for my child to participate and waive the two-week waiting period.**

☐ **___ Option 2: I give consent for my child to participate, but would like the two-week wait period.**

☐ **___ Option 3: I do not give consent for my child to participate.**

Student's Name:		
School:	**Teacher:**	**Grade:**
I am the legal parent/guardian, and have read, understand, and agree to the terms of this School Counseling Consent. I give permission for my child to receive school counseling services at this school for the current school year **20__ /20__.** *I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time by signing and dating a written note requesting termination of counseling services.*		
Parent/Guardian Signature:		**Date:**
Parent/Guardian Phone:	**Parent/Guardian Email:**	

Approved 9/17/18

Component #3: Ethical Considerations and Theoretical Approaches

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) and Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBT) are two theoretical approaches I will primarily use when counseling children and adolescents. REBT is an age appropriate approach because it focuses on concrete concepts and in this age group children are concrete thinkers (Vernon an Schimmel, 2019). It focuses on the issues at hand and allows children to really understand their thoughts, feelings and behaviors (Vernon and Schimmel, 2019). Secondly, I would use SFBT with children and adolescents because it is successful in goal-setting and helping children become skilled at focusing on a solution rather than the problem itself (Vernon and Schimmel, 2019). There are ample opportunities to incorporate SFBT within a comprehensive school counseling program. Specifically, I prefer the use of scaling to help students gain perspective of their circumstances and the ability to see their own progress in that goal-setting. With REBT I would focus on rational and irrational beliefs. I think this concept can be really beneficial for students because it is a learned skill to be actively conscious of your positive and negative thoughts and understand how they could be affecting you in the larger picture. It would be important to have an understanding of the student's culture and background because it impacts the student's values, beliefs, and worldview. This would determine the kind of goals and approach that would best fit the student. Similarly, it's important to honor the student's faith even in a secular setting. Kimber and Schellenberg describe how a school counselor could prepare to address religious and spiritual diversity. Based on their recommendations I would determine needs that could arise with the students' beliefs, value the belief, understand how it impacts the family and community, and intentionally review my own beliefs and experiences (Kimber and Schellenberg, 2013).

School counselors collaborate with teachers to address behaviors in the classroom. Johnson and Hannon explain, “School counselors and teachers are also in the same environment, which provides the opportunity to co-observe behaviors and co-develop plans of action” (2015, p. 3). Confidentiality is of utmost importance and first and foremost is given to the student. The school counselor must assess the situation and understand the obligation and rights to include parents explained by ASCA standard A. 2. Confidentiality, g. (ASCA, 2016). I would explain to the student that I am a safe adult that they can trust and talk to about their feelings. I would also tell the student that I would need to tell their parents if there was harm involved to themselves or others. ASCA outlines, “...Serious and foreseeable harm is different for each minor in schools and is determined by a student’s developmental and chronological age, the setting, parental/guardian rights and the nature of the harm” (ASCA, 2016). Because of the age and development, I would contact the parents to discuss the behaviors that the teacher referred the student for. A referral to other services would be required if the student required specialized treatment that the school counselor was not adequately trained for. Additionally, a referral should take place if the student is in immediate danger or harm.

Play therapy is an effective form of communication for students. Therefore, this will be an approach that I implement as a school counselor. Students use play to process their feelings and situations. They may not be aware, but a trained counselor can sometimes identify the hidden meaning within their play (Vernon and Schimmel, 2019). Play therapy allows for the child to have a more engaging experience in the counseling setting. Play therapy can meet a wide range of students, as the school counselor can adjust the type of play based upon age and development. Vernon and Schimmel explain, “...Adlerian play therapy is deemed effective in

reducing disruptive disorders and behaviors and is promising for building positive self-esteem" (2019, p. 115).

Component #4: Multicultural Counseling and Transition Programming

A school counselor will see a variety of cultures and diverse students. One way that I can continually grow in developing my awareness, knowledge and skills is to consistently recognize my own experiences and biases. This is specified in ASCA Ethical Standards under B.3 *Responsibilities to Self,* "Explore and examine implicit biases and the impact on practice and interaction with students; apply learning to program practice and development" (ASCA, 2016). In order to become a culturally competent school counselor, I must study other cultures and begin to understand how the beliefs and values impact one's identity. Vernon and Schimmel give some ways in which to improve, by, "...developing cross-cultural relationships in personal and professional settings, reading autobiographies written by individuals from diverse backgrounds, opening yourself to new learning experiences, attending professional development workshops that focus on various aspects of multiculturalism, or learning another language" (2019, p. 304). These are all ways in which I will aim to develop my knowledge and skills of counseling diverse youth. Client world-view and Counseling and Advocacy Interventions are two multicultural competencies that directly relate and impact student learning. The client's world-view determines how they live their day to day and the choices they make. The school counselor must understand their perspective in order to best meet their needs across development, culture and spiritual beliefs. So, the way a counselor advocates and intervenes for a student will be impacted by their cultural diversity.

Creative arts is a culturally appropriate counseling intervention for working with diverse youth. This is an effective approach because there is an aspect of creative arts in all cultures and

children can use arts to express feelings and thoughts regardless of language barriers and differences (Vernon and Schimmel, 2019). As previously mentioned, play therapy reaches a wide range of youth. Play therapy is another effective intervention as it can help students discover how their culture and beliefs shape their thoughts and sense of self (Vernon and Schimmel, 2019). Lastly, counseling through the means of storytelling and books can benefit diverse students. Students can create their own stories about who they are and where they come from which gives the counselor a meaningful glimpse into their culture (Vernon and Schimmel, 2019).

Students will face unknowns and challenges as they make transitions throughout their academic career. School counselors can use Transition programs to ease these fears and equip students with the appropriate skills to overcome the challenges. Cauley and Jovanovich write, "They identified four dimensions of preparedness: academic success, independent and industrious work habits, conformity to adult standards, and coping mechanisms for such activities as keeping track of assignments and resolving conflicts" (2006, p. 18). These are the skills that a school counselor can focus on within the transition program. If there is a population within the school that the administration is noticing patterns of dropouts or other negative factors, the school counselor could develop a transition program that specifically targets the population at risk with interventions to meet the needs. Lastly, transition programming can benefit students by plugging them into activities within the community such as internships, volunteer opportunities, mentorships, tutoring, etc. These types of opportunities can provide students with support and abilities that will increase their chances for success as they transition to the next step in their academic careers. The school counselor can partner with other organizations outside of the school to arrange these opportunities within the program.

Component #5: Counseling At-Risk Children/Adolescents

The four-step framework for working with at-risk children and adolescents is assessment, prevention, intervention and social advocacy (Vernon and Schimmel, 2019). The first step is assessment, which is a time to complete a comprehensive work up of the issues the child is experiencing. It is important to gather as much history and data on the student as you can. Next is prevention, which is focused on identifying factors that could prevent further trauma for the student. Intervention is the next process which builds upon prevention. Intervention is different in the fact that it is the appropriate techniques and strategies used to improve issues that at-risk children are experiencing. Social advocacy is an integral part of the four-step framework. As a social advocate for children and adolescents, the school counselor must engage with the community and educate themselves on social matters that the client is facing (Vernon and Schimmel, 2019). For children and adolescents struggling with depression or anxiety, I would use EMDR therapy and Adventure Therapy. For substance abuse and addiction I would use Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Motivational Interviewing (Kelly and Daley, 2013).

The purpose and importance of a crisis management plan is to inform school personnel on different types of crisis and how to respond to them in a detailed manner. It is important because everyone who is working within the school setting needs to respond to the crisis in the same manner. The crisis management team is responsible for preparing individuals to respond to an emergency. A team may be made up of administrators, counselors, psychologists, media, parent, student and campus liaisons, and nurses (Erbacher, Singer, and Poland, 2014). According to *The School Counselor and Safe Schools and Crisis Response,* the responsibility of the school counselor includes, “Participating in district and school response team planning and practices and helping ensure students and staff are able to process/understand crisis response drills”

(ASCA, 2016). Following a traumatic event, the school counselor should offer small group counseling as well as individual counseling. The school counselor should monitor high-risk individuals (Erbacher, Singer, and Poland, 2014). Erbacher, Singer and Poland also outline the three tiers of crisis postvention which are, Universal, Selective and Indicated Interventions (2014).

Universal and Selective prevention programs are ones that a school counselor might use in their work with students. Universal prevention programs target the entire population of students regardless of whether or not they are at-risk (2014). Selective intervention is a prevention program that identifies students who may potentially become a risk for suicide even though they have not shown the behaviors (2014). It is vitally important to implement suicide prevention programs in schools because schools bring in children from all sorts of backgrounds and circumstances, meaning that there will be children experiencing risk factors that can lead to suicide. Schools are responsbile to do everything in their power to prevent students from suicide. The School Mental Health Professional and administators will play a large role in the prevention program, but Erbacher, Singer and Poland explain that it is the responsibility of every person in the school to be aware of risk factors and warning signs in order to prevent students from suicide (2014).

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