



## School-Based Mental Health Professionals in Oklahoma

Federal law according to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Sec. 4102 defines a school-based mental health services provider as “a State-licensed or State-certified school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, or other State licensed or certified mental health professional qualified under State law to provide mental health services to children and adolescents.”

School-Based Mental Health Professionals assist and strengthen schools and districts by providing comprehensive supports. These professionals work collaboratively to meet the many needs of students and staff with their unique skills, training, and expertise through a team-based approach. Collaboration, consultation, and direct services are provided within multi-tiered systems of support, which emphasize evidence-based interventions, data-based problem-solving practices, connecting families with resources, and student equity.

	School Counselors	Certified School Psychologists	School Social Workers	Licensed Mental Health Professionals	Recreational Therapists
Overview	Comprehensive School Counselors help all students in the areas of academic achievement, career, and social and emotional development, ensuring today's students become the productive, well-adjusted adults of tomorrow. School counselors are vital members of the education team. School counselors design and deliver school counseling programs that improve student outcomes. They lead, advocate, and collaborate to promote equity and access for all students.	Certified School Psychologists are uniquely qualified members of school teams that support students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach. They apply expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior to help students succeed socially, academically, behaviorally, and emotionally. School psychologists partner with families, teachers, school administrators, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments that strengthen connections between home, school, and the community.	School Social Workers are Oklahoma Licensed Social Workers specializing in school services. School Social Workers are trained mental health professionals providing support for students' social and emotional behavioral health. They are uniquely trained to serve as a link between home, school, and community through direct and indirect services. School social workers serve as specialized mental health members on school interdisciplinary teams.	Licensed Mental Health Professionals (LMHPs) are defined as a physician, licensed clinical psychologist, licensed professional counselor, licensed clinical social worker, licensed substance abuse treatment practitioner, licensed marriage and family therapist, or certified psychiatric clinical nurse specialist.	Recreational therapy, also known as therapeutic recreation, is a systematic process that utilizes recreation and other activity-based interventions to address the assessed needs of individuals with illnesses and/or disabling conditions, as a means to psychological and physical health, recovery, and well-being.

**School Counselors**

Oklahoma school counselors have training and knowledge which aligns with the [ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs](#).

School counseling preparation programs prepare professionals with the following knowledge and skills:

- Foundational knowledge
- Core theories and concepts
- Instructional and school counseling interventions
- Student learning outcomes
- Comprehensive school counseling programs
- Professional practice
- Ethical practice

School counseling graduate programs can be accredited through the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) or the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). CACREP and CAEP are both nationally recognized specialized accreditors. The primary difference is their respective focuses. CAEP accredits educator preparation providers—reviewing departments, schools, and colleges that prepare teachers or other educators within an institution of higher education. CACREP accredits counseling programs at the master’s and doctoral degree levels. Accreditation is not required.

**Certified School Psychologists**

Oklahoma certified school psychologists have training and knowledge which aligns with the [NASP Model of Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services](#), also known as the Practice Model. The Practice Model indicates [10 Domains of Professional Practice](#) including:

- Data-based decision making
- Consultation and collaboration
- Academic interventions and instructional supports
- Mental and behavioral health services and interventions
- School-wide practices to promote learning
- Services to promote safe and supportive schools
- Family, school, and community collaboration
- Equitable practices for diverse student populations
- Research and evidence-based practices
- Legal, ethical, and professional practice

**School Social Workers**

School social workers have training and knowledge that aligns with the [NASW Standards for School Social Work](#) and is used in conjunction with the [SSWAA Practice Model](#).

School Social Workers are prepared with specialized knowledge and skills:

- Core competencies of social work practice and ethical standards
- Historical and current perspectives of public education policies
- Strengths-based perspective that honors diversity, culture, and empowerment
- Person in environment perspective
- Evidence-based education, behavioral, and mental health services
- Prevention and intervention services
- Effects of oppression, poverty, discrimination, and marginalization
- Assessments for individuals, families, communities, and systems
- Data review and decision making
- Interdisciplinary collaboration and leadership
- Crisis intervention and prevention
- Trauma-informed care

**Licensed Mental Health Professionals**

LMHPs must follow a planned, sequenced mental health program, complete an internship/residency, and pass all required state/national board exams. LMHPs must remain in good standing with the board, maintain continuing education, and maintain yearly license renewal requirements. Most LMHP programs are centered around core content areas:

- Human growth/development
- Abnormal human behavior
- Appraisal/assessment
- Counseling theories/methods
- Professional orientation/ethics
- Research and evaluation
- Practicum/internship

Elective content areas come from the following: group dynamics, lifestyle and career development, social and cultural foundations, addiction, rehabilitation, children and adolescent, gerontology, human sexuality, crisis intervention, marriage and family, clinical supervision, personality theories, consultation, physical and emotional health, grief, psychopharmacology.

**Recreational Therapists**

Recreational therapists need a bachelor’s degree, usually in recreational therapy or a related field such as recreation and leisure studies, with an emphasis or concentration in recreational therapy/therapeutic recreation. Bachelor’s degree programs usually include an internship. Recreational therapy programs include courses in:

- Assessment
- Human anatomy
- Medical and psychiatric terminology
- Characteristics of illnesses and disabilities
- Use of assistive devices and technology

Recreational therapists are trained in:

- Coping Strategies
- Psychology
- Theories and Practices of Recreation as Treatment
- Group Dynamics
- Physical Disabilities
- Human Growth and Development
- Inclusion
- Adapted Environment
- Social Interactions Strategies
- Leisure Education
- Trauma-Informed Care

## School Counselors

### Traditional certification steps:

- Master's degree in School Counseling Program
- Passing score on the required examination:
  - [Oklahoma Subject Area Test \(OSAT\) in School Counseling](#)
  - OR [School Counselor Praxis](#) (5422)
- Background check

### Alternative Certification two-step process to determine eligibility:

- **Must have one of the following:** Master's Degree in a school counseling-related field, OR a Master's Degree AND two years of counseling experience
- **AND one of the following:** 30 or more counseling-related graduate credit hours, OR 15 or more counseling-related graduate credit hours plus one year of counseling-related work experience, OR three or more years of counseling-related work experience
- Plus, passing score on the required examination:
  - [Oklahoma Subject Area Test \(OSAT\) in School Counseling](#)
  - OR [School Counselor Praxis](#) (5422)

## Certified School Psychologists

### Steps to becoming a certified school psychologist:

- Master's degree with Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS), OR Specialist degree, OR doctoral degree in School Psychology (minimum of 60 hours regardless of degree)
- Completion of a year-long, 1,200 hour supervised internship (individuals may apply for Emergency Certification for one year while completing internship)
- Passing score on the Praxis School Psychology Test and successful completion of the Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) Certification OR Oklahoma Subject Area Test (OSAT) in School Psychology
- Submission of Oklahoma's Standard Teacher Certification Application with all college transcripts

## School Social Workers

### Steps to become a licensed social worker:

- Master's degree in Social Work from an accredited Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) program
- Completion of an application and affidavit of legal status with the [Oklahoma State Board of Licensed Social Workers](#) and fingerprint and background check.
- Passing score on the appropriate licensure examination by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB)
  - Clinical Social Work Practice (LCSW)
  - Social Work Administration (LSW-ADM)
  - Generalist Social Work Practice (LMSW, LSW, LSWA)
- Oklahoma "Licensure Requirements" for each license can be found under the [Oklahoma Administrative Code Title 675 State Board of Licensed Social Workers](#)

## Licensed Mental Health Professionals

Oklahoma LMHPs must complete, at minimum, a specialized level degree program (60+hours) or a doctoral degree (90+hours) and must complete a required internship or residency based on requirements from the respective licensure board.

- Completion of a background check

## Recreational Therapists

At a minimum, Oklahoma Recreational Therapists must complete a bachelor's degree in Recreational Therapy or a related field. The degree often includes an internship.

A qualified recreational therapist is nationally certified as a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS), usually referred to as Recreational Therapists. Qualified professionals are certified through the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC), which requires a bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited university, a formal internship, and the passing of a national certification examination. A CTRS must maintain their credential every five years through the NCTRC recertification process.

- Completion of a background check

	School Counselors	Certified School Psychologists	School Social Workers	Licensed Mental Health Professionals	Recreational Therapists
How to become a... (continued)	<p><b>Alternative Certification eligibility (continued):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Background check</li> <li>Completion of <a href="#">two college credit courses (six credit hours)</a> addressing the components of a comprehensive school counseling program, including but not limited to, data-informed decision making, closing achievement and opportunity gaps, school counseling ethical standards, and improving student achievement, attendance and discipline or approved equivalents within three years</li> </ul> <p><b>Emergency Certification:</b> Decisions regarding <a href="#">emergency certification</a> are handled at the local level then approved by the State School Board. <a href="#">Specific school counseling emergency certification guidance can be found here.</a></p>	<p><b>Steps to becoming a certified school psychologist (continued):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Background check</li> </ul> <p>For employment opportunities, view: individual school district websites, "<a href="#">Job Search</a>" on the OSDE website, or postings to the Oklahoma School Psychological Association <a href="#">website</a> and <a href="#">Facebook page</a>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">NASP Approved School Psychology Programs</a></li> <li><a href="#">Overview of Degrees in School Psychology</a></li> <li><a href="#">State School Psychology Credentialing Requirements</a></li> </ul>			
How to code...	<p><b>School Counselors:</b></p> <p>Function 2120 Job Class 203</p>	<p><b>Certified School Psychologists:</b></p> <p>Function 2140 Job Class 343</p>	<p><b>School Social Workers</b> (including Licensed Master Social Workers and Licensed Clinical Social Workers):</p> <p>Function 2113 Job Class 352</p>	<p><b>Licensed Mental Health Professionals</b> (including Licensed Professional Counselor, Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist):</p> <p>Function 2132 Job Class 2017</p>	<p><b>Licensed Recreational Therapists:</b></p> <p>Function 2132 Job Class 345</p>

	School Counselors	Certified School Psychologists	School Social Workers	Licensed Mental Health Professionals	Recreational Therapists
Role in Schools	<p>Oklahoma school counselors provide direct and indirect student services. Direct student services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School-wide school counseling classroom lessons based on the Oklahoma Mindsets &amp; Behaviors</li> <li>• Small group counseling</li> <li>• Individual student academic planning and goal setting</li> <li>• Short-term counseling to students</li> </ul> <p>Indirect student services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referrals for long-term support</li> <li>• Collaboration with families, teachers, administrators, and community</li> <li>• Advocacy for students at student-focused meetings</li> <li>• Data analysis to identify student issues, needs, and challenges</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">The Role of the School Counselor</a></p> <p><a href="#">Who are School Counselors?</a></p>	<p>Oklahoma school psychologists work with students, teachers, parents, administrators, and community members to improve academic achievement, promote positive behavior, increase access to mental health support, and support and advocate for diverse learners. They help to create safe schools through multi-tiered systems of support and improving school climate. They help to strengthen the partnership between home and school. School psychologists use data and assessments to monitor student progress and work with teachers on best-practice interventions to improve academics and behavior.</p> <p><a href="#">Who are School Psychologists?</a></p>	<p>Oklahoma school social workers provide <a href="#">direct and indirect services</a> to students, families, school systems, and communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate and link engagement between student, family, school, and community</li> <li>• Advocacy for students and their families that promotes equal access to services and supports</li> <li>• Work with students' living situations that affect the students' school success</li> <li>• Provide multi-tiered system of support in behavior and mental health services</li> <li>• Assist students with developing social and emotional skills</li> <li>• Crisis intervention</li> <li>• Cope with family, grief, medical, substance use, and sexuality issues</li> <li>• Provide assessments for behavioral health, assess school climate, develop safety plans</li> <li>• Obtain and coordinate community resources and systems of care that provide external and wrap-around services for students and families</li> <li>• Provide training and communicate policies and procedures for reporting child abuse and neglect</li> </ul>	<p>LMHPs work with students, teachers, parents, administrators, and community members to enhance student mental health support. The LMHP can be used within school settings in multiple ways; they can conduct individual therapeutic interventions, small group psychotherapy interventions, and serve as members of mental health intervention teams within school settings to provide mental health knowledge and support. They can provide professional development, coaching, and technical assistance to educators, families, and community stakeholders centered around prevention, mental health, and wellness.</p> <p>LMHPs can also be used virtually as well as face-to-face to conduct services with students. LMHPs are valuable within the multi-tiered system of support structure. They are instrumental in helping implement universal supports for Tier 1 and streamlined supports for Tier 2 and Tier 3.</p>	<p>Recreational therapists can provide services to students and the school environment, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching and developing skills through the APIED (Assessment, Planning, Implementing Interventions, Evaluating treatment, and Documentation) process</li> <li>• Assisting the student to master and generalize skills to a broader school and community setting through recreation participation</li> <li>• Providing expertise in leisure, recreation, inclusion, and goal-orientated activities</li> <li>• Planning for transitions</li> <li>• Helping close gaps and ensure the education and life success of students with disabilities</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Recreational Therapy</a></p> <p><a href="#">Recreational Therapy and School Systems</a></p> <p><a href="#">Recreational Therapy Informational Video</a></p>
Recommended Ratio	The national recommended ratio is 1:250.	The national recommended ratio is 1:500.	The national recommended ratio is 1:250 if working with general education students; if serving students with more intensive needs, a ratio of 1:50 is recommended.	There is currently not a recommended ratio.	There is currently not a recommended ratio.

## References

- American School Counselor Association (2019). *The ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling programs* (4th ed.). Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Frey, A.J., Alvarez, M.E., Dupper, D.R., Sabatino, C.A., Lindsey, B.C., Raines, J.C., Streeck, F., McInerney, A., Norris, M.A. (2013). *School Social Work Practice Model*. School Social Work Association of America.
- National Association of School Psychologists (2015). *School Psychology: A Career That Makes a Difference*.  
<https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/a-career-that-makes-a-difference>
- National Association of School Psychologists (2020). *The Professional Standards of the National Association of School Psychologists*.  
<https://www.nasponline.org/standards-and-certification/nasp-practice-model/about-the-nasp-practice-model>
- National Association of School Psychologists (2021, January 22). *Who are School Psychologists?*  
<https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/who-are-school-psychologists>
- National Association of Social Workers (2012). *NASW Standards for School Social Work Services*. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Practice-Standards-Guidelines>