



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 Counselors | Certified School Psychologists | School Social Workers | Licensed Mental Health Professionals |
|----------|--|--|---|--|
| Overview | <p>Comprehensive School Counselors help all students in the areas of academic achievement, career, and social 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 by connecting their school counseling program to the school's academic mission and school improvement plan.</p> | <p>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 children and youth succeed academically, socially, 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.</p> | <p>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.</p> | <p>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.</p> |

Training

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

Students who attend a graduate program that is accredited through the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and are preparing to specialize as school counselors will demonstrate the professional knowledge and skills necessary to promote the academic, career, and personal/social development of all PK-12 students through data-informed school counseling programs. CACREP school counseling programs must cover foundations, contextual dimensions, and practice in addition to the CACREP standards.

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

Graduate programs also prepare students with knowledge and skills in these areas: data collection and analysis; assessment; progress monitoring; resilience and risk factors; prevention and intervention services; special education services; crisis preparedness, response, and recovery; research and program evaluation; professional ethics, school law, and systems.

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 principles

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 certain core content areas:

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

Elective content focus areas come from the following:

- Group dynamics
- Lifestyle/career development
- Social/cultural foundations
- Addictions counseling
- Rehabilitation counseling
- Children/adolescent counseling
- Gerontology
- Human sexuality
- Personality theories
- Crisis intervention
- Marriage/family counseling
- Clinical supervision
- Psychopharmacology
- Consultation
- Physical and emotional health
- Grief counseling

School Counselors

Traditional certification steps:

- Master's degree in School Counseling Program
- Passing score on all required examinations:
 - Oklahoma General Education Test (OGET)
 - Oklahoma Professional Teaching Exam (OPTE)
 - Oklahoma Subject Area Test (OSAT) in School Counseling
- 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** two years of counseling experience
- **AND one of the following:** 30 or more counseling related credit hours, **OR** 15 or more counseling related credit hours plus one year of counseling- related work experience, **OR** three or more years of counseling-related work experience
- Plus, passing score on all required examinations:
 - Oklahoma General Education Test (OGET)
 - Oklahoma Professional Teaching Exam (OPTE)
 - Oklahoma Subject Area Test (OSAT) in School Counseling
- Background check
- Completion of a college credit course on classroom management and a college credit course on general or subject-specific pedagogical principles, or approved equivalents within three years

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 **OR** passing score on required state tests including the Oklahoma General Education Test (OGET), Oklahoma Professional Teaching Exam (OPTE), and Oklahoma Subject Area Test (OSAT) in School Psychology
- Submission of Oklahoma's Standard Teacher Certification Application with all college transcripts
- Background check

For employment opportunities, view: individual school district websites, "[Job Search](#)" on the OSDE website, or postings to the Oklahoma School Psychological Association [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).

- [Overview of Degrees in School Psychology](#)
- [NASP Approved School Psychology Programs in OK](#)
- [State School Psychology Credentialing Requirements](#)

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](#) along with fingerprint/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

| | School Counselors | Certified School Psychologists | School Social Workers | Licensed Mental Health Professionals |
|-------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Role in Schools | <p>Oklahoma school counselors provide direct and indirect student services.</p> <p>Direct student services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-wide school counseling classroom lessons based on the Oklahoma Mindsets & Behaviors • Small group counseling • Individual student academic planning and goal setting • Short-term counseling to students <p>Indirect student services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referrals for long-term support • Collaboration with families, teachers, administrators, and community • Advocacy for students at student-focused meetings • Data analysis to identify student issues, needs, and challenges <p>The Role of the School Counselor</p> <p>Who are School Counselors?</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>Who are School Psychologists?</p> | <p>Oklahoma school social workers provide direct and indirect services to students, families, communities, and school systems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate and link engagement between student, family, school, and community • Advocacy for students and their families that promotes equal access to services and supports • Work with students' living situations that affect the students' school success • Provide multi-tiered systems of support in behavior and mental health services • Assist students with developing social and emotional skills • Crisis intervention • Cope with family, medical, substance use, sexuality, and grief/loss issues • Provide assessments for students behavioral health, assess school climate, develop safety plans • Obtain and coordinate community resources and systems of care that provide external and wrap-around services for students and families • Provide training support and communicate procedures and policies for reporting child abuse and neglect | <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 can serve as a member 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 as well as streamlined supports for Tier 2 and Tier 3.</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. |

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