



# APA Public Interest Government Relations Office

## Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program

School mental health and counseling services play a crucial role in ensuring a safe school environment, increasing academic achievement, promoting student well-being and development, and improving teacher effectiveness. Given the urgent need to expand these proven effective services, APA is very concerned that the President's FY 2008 Budget proposes to eliminate this vital program.

### **School Mental Health Services Need to Be Expanded Because:**

- It is estimated that about 20 percent of U.S. children ages 9 to 17 has a diagnosable mental or addictive disorder, but only one in five of these children receives mental health services.
- The serious shortage of qualified psychologists, counselors, and social workers in America's schools undermines efforts to make schools safe and improve academic achievement.
- Over 20 years of research demonstrates that school counseling and mental health services can significantly improve student achievement and school attendance, and reduce disruptive behavior.

### **Mental Health and Counseling Personnel Contribute to Schools by:**

- Helping teachers improve classroom management and provide quality instruction to assist students in achieving high academic standards.
- Assisting students and their families to overcome personal problems or disabilities that affect students' academic achievement and relationships with peers, family members, and others.
- Responding to mental health needs of students, staff, and families related to incidents of school violence, crime, accidents, terrorist activities, or other traumatic events in the school and community.
- Working with teachers and other staff to develop and implement targeted or school-wide programs to improve school functioning, school safety, and student mental health.
- Offering information and guidance on post-secondary education and training options, and assisting students and their families in meeting the financial requirements for post-secondary education.

## Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program

### **The Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program Currently Provides:**

- Grant funding in the amount of \$34.6 million in FY 2007 to local educational agencies to establish or expand counseling programs in elementary schools. Priority is given to applicants that demonstrate the greatest need for school counseling services, propose the most innovative and promising approaches, demonstrate effectiveness, employ developmental and preventative approaches, including early identification and intervention, provide for teacher training and parent involvement, and collaborate with existing community services.
- Schools will be able to expand counseling services to secondary schools when funding reaches \$40 million.

### **The American Psychological Association strongly recommends:**

- An appropriation of \$61.5 million in FY 2008 to maintain and expand this vital program.

