

**School of Education**  
**Department of Human Development and Psychoeducational Studies**

**Master's Degree School Counseling Program**

**District of Columbia State Education Agency: Office of Accreditation**

**Overview**

The Master's Degree Program in School Counseling is located in the Department of Human Development and Psychoeducational Studies. The primary mission of the program is to foster the development of excellence in professional, personal growth, and respect for diversity in order to prepare graduates for exceptional service particularly in the areas of leadership, advocacy and support of the educational achievement and the life skills success of all students. The delivery service network for the school counseling program is large, therefore, the network includes people who are stakeholders in these institutions, the unit, DCHS and its school counseling program in particular, seeks to offer a program of study that meets the challenging needs of this metropolitan area which includes urban, suburban and rural school systems. Thus, the overall mission of the program is to offer its candidates the opportunity to take on both traditional and innovative roles in area schools.

**Conceptual Framework**

The Master's Degree Program in School Counseling operates from a School of Education Conceptual Framework (See Appendix A) that is grounded in the established an evolving expectations of the school counseling profession. These expectations are articulated in the national standards set forth by **the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)**. While the program is not currently CACREP approved, the CACREP accreditation standards are used to implement the program.

Over the past eight years the department and its' school counseling program have worked to respond to recommendations by the District of Columbia State Education Agency on Accreditation and the Maryland State Department of Education to move towards CACREP approval. This growth process has been productive and required self-reflection that has been beneficial to the department. Changes in the program and its administration included an increase in the number of credits required for the master's degree in school counseling from 36 to 48; expanding the internship clinical hours from 100 hours over two semesters to 700 hours over two semesters. The program has also hired and adjunct faculty member to assist with the additional course load. In addition, students are encouraged to complete 60 semester hours in order to meet the National Certified Counselor licensure requirements.

To serve the wide range of school system partners served by the program in school counseling, candidates in the program are exposed to content knowledge that stems from both the CACREP standards and a conceptual framework that values meeting the unique needs of stakeholders in our region's school systems. These two guiding criteria inform the mission and objectives of the department and all of its programs. The department seeks to produce school counselors who are prepared to work effectively in schools thereby implementing comprehensive developmental school counseling programs as described by the American School Counseling Association (ASCA 2002). The following narrative describes the content knowledge of the program, which emanates from its guiding standards and framework.

### **CACREP Standards**

The key themes of the school counseling program are consistent with the common core areas of the CACREP standards. Each of these components comprise the content areas of the school counseling program. Candidates in the school counseling program are expected to demonstrate competency in these areas as reflected through multiple assessment throughout the program.

#### **Professional Identity**

Candidates in the school counseling program are expected to understand the roles and functions of professional school counselors. Awareness of the history and philosophy of the entire counseling profession in addition to knowledge of the foundations of the profession of school counseling provides the basis for this understanding. How school counselors relate with other human services providers is also an important part of the candidate's professional identity. The program requires a thorough knowledge of the ethical standards of the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the American School Counseling Association (ASCA). Other content areas of importance under the core component of professional identity include awareness of professional credentialing, and certification, licensure and accreditation practices standards (CACREP, 2001).

#### **Social and Cultural Diversity**

Candidates must obtain a thorough understanding of the cultural context within which helping relationships exist. This includes a consideration of culture, ethnicity, gender, race, sexual orientation, age, and ability among other factors. This content area also includes theories of multicultural counseling, identity development, multicultural competencies and ethical legal considerations (CACREP, 2001).

## **Human Growth and Development**

Candidates must understand of the nature and needs of individuals at all developmental levels. This includes theories of individual and family development across the life-span; learning and personality development; and human behavior as well as theories for facilitating optimum development over the life-span (CACREP, 2001).

## **Career Development**

Candidates must understand career development and related life factors including career development theories and decision-making models; career information resources; career development program planning; the relationship between work, family and other life roles; issues of diversity; and gender in career development. Career assessment instruments, techniques and resources are included as part of content in this area (CACREP 2001).

## **Helping Relationships**

School Counseling candidates are required understand the foundations of a helping relationship. This includes all aspects of the counseling and consultation process, including practitioner characteristics and behaviors important to the helping process. Candidates also demonstrate essential interviewing and counseling skills including how to develop a therapeutic relationship and establish appropriate goals through formal and informal assessments and diagnosis. The ability to employ specific interventions to evaluate client outcomes, and to successfully terminate the helping relationship are also important. In order to achieve this content objective, candidates must apply counseling theories that provide a framework for change. Theoretical content includes examination of the historical development of counseling theories, particularly affective, behavioral and cognitive perspectives. (CACREP, 2001).

## **Group Work**

Candidates in the School Counseling Program are expected to obtain a thorough understanding of the principles of group dynamics and group process as they relate to the helping relationship. This content area includes group leadership styles and approaches as well as the characteristics of various types of group leaders and leadership styles. Candidates are expected to understand theories of group counseling and apply group process skills to bring about change.

## **Assessment**

Candidates in the program are expected to know content that provides an understanding of individual and group approaches to assessment and evaluation. This content area includes understanding the historical perspectives concerning the nature and meaning of assessment and basic concepts of standardized and non-standardized testing.

## **Research and Program Evaluation**

Candidates for the degree in School Counseling are expected to understand qualitative, quantitative, single case designs, action research, and outcome-based research. This initial understanding of research methods is designed to help candidates identify and draw from the best informed practices in the field. The objectives of this content areas also include an introduction to statistical methods in conducting research and program evaluation.

All candidates must demonstrate an awareness of the role of the professional school counselor and be able to explain the principles and concepts of these core standards. The department strives to produce candidates who graduate with a thorough understanding of the role of the professional school counselor as well as the central concepts, tools of inquiry and structures of their fields. The following table describes the points and methods by which candidates are expected to obtain the core content in the school counseling program.

Table 1 Course Work That Reflects Content Knowledge Standards

<b><u>Core Content Area</u></b>	<b><u>Point of acquisition</u></b>	<b><u>Method of acquisition</u></b>	<b><u>Exhibit #</u></b>
<b>Professional Identity</b>	<b>HUDE 240</b> -Introduction to the profession of Counseling <b>HUDE 346</b> –Counseling in Schools K-12 Counselor	-Written papers -Case Studies -Simulation activities Project	
<b>Social and Cultural Diversity</b>	<b>HUDE 347</b> -Multicultural Counseling and Psychotherapy <b>HUDE 246</b> Professional, Ethical,& Legal Issues in School Counseling	-Written papers -Case studies -Projects	
<b>Human Growth and Development</b>	<b>HUDE 201</b> -Human Development	-Written papers -Case Studies -Projects	
<b>Career Development</b>	<b>HUDE 242</b> -Career Counseling and Lifestyle Development	-Written papers -Case studies -Projects	
<b>Helping Relationships</b>	<b>HUDE 241</b> -Techniques and Theories of Counseling and Psychotherapy <b>HUDE 240</b> -Introduction to the Profession of Counseling	-Written papers -Case studies -Simulation activities Projects	

	HUDE 225-Advanced Measurement and Evaluation HUDE 344-Practicum in Counseling HUDE 345-Internship in Counseling HUDE 441 Consulting in Counseling HUDE 243 Organizational and Administration of Counseling Services HUDE 229-Contemporary Issues in School Counseling		
<b>Group Work</b>	HUDE 343-Group Counseling and Process	-Written papers -Case studies -Group Experience	
<b>Assessment</b>	HUDE 200 Introduction to Educational Research HUDE 205-Introduction to Statistical Methods HUDE 225-Advanced Measurement and Evaluation	-Written papers -Case studies -Projects	
<b>Research and Evaluation</b>	HUDE 200 Introduction to Educational Research HUDE 300, HUDE 301 Educational Research – Thesis Writing	-Written papers -Case studies -Projects	

In addition to the course work listed in the above table, candidates are also assessed on their content acquisition at during field work during practicum and internship experiences. Candidates are also expected to demonstrate accepted or target acquisition of content knowledge during a final comprehensive examination..

### **Standard I – Dispositions – All Programs**

- **Refer to standards used in your program and elements of your Conceptual Framework. Also, refer to list of dispositions in Preconditions Report**

The master's degree program in School Counseling places an emphasis on candidate dispositions and expects that all candidates complete this program with a set of characteristics that are aligned with the conceptual frameworks of the School of Education. Specifically, candidates are expected to build upon dispositions they possess upon entering the program and develop attitudes that as professionals will represent the best interests of communities, schools and families for the support of student learning.

The program exposes candidates to its on dispositions that focus on a) respect for diversity; b) a developmental and contextual perspective; c) therapeutic change achieved through the helping relationship; d) empathic understanding; e) collaboration and consultation, and f) ethical behavior. These dispositions expand conceptual framework of the School of Education which emphasizes *Diversity, Multiple Perspectives, Authentic Assessment and Best Informed Practices*. These dispositions are coupled with the content knowledge and professional knowledge of the program are designed to address the complex needs of our regional schools.

### **Diversity**

Candidates develop a respect for diversity throughout their program but build a deeper contextual understanding of culture and diversity in the HUDE 347 Multicultural Counseling and Psychotherapy. The objectives of this course focus on specific skill and knowledge for the topic as well as the dispositional wisdom and knowledge that allow candidates to reflect on their own identity in relation to students and staff members of schools and communities. This process is intended to create a respect for diversity and knowledge of strategies to address issues that arise within the diverse school environments in which the candidate will eventually work.

### **Therapeutic Change through the Helping Relationship**

Candidates value therapeutic change attained through the helping relationship as a result of course work and the attitudes of faculty. There are several courses where this takes place (see table 1). Upon completion of course work that cover theory, group counseling and process, advanced measurement and evaluation, testing, diagnosis, and advance theory and techniques, candidates are expected to enter the school counseling practicum and internship with the knowledge and skills necessary for facilitation therapeutic change. Candidates are also expected to demonstrate the wisdom necessary to craft these skills into a variety of interventions.

### **Developmental and Contextual Perspective**

Candidates respect and utilize a developmental and contextual perspective on humans, particularly when working with students. This perspective is established through course work and faculty guidance. Candidates begin building on their own attitudes about development and context during the multicultural counseling and human growth and development courses described above.

## **Empathic Understanding**

Candidates value the importance of having an empathic understanding of students. Candidates are encouraged to realize that in order to help students one must have empathy and be able to communicate that empathy appropriately. Successful candidates adopt this disposition without letting counter-transference jeopardize the helping relationship. Empathy and the skills necessary to communicate it are covered in counseling techniques and theories courses and the helping relationship courses.

## **Collaboration and Consultation**

Candidates develop specific skills and knowledge about collaboration and consultation during their coursework. They also respect the systemic perspectives that relate to these approaches and develop attitudes that incorporate such practices into problem solving and program development. More specifically, these skills are developed in the course consulting in the schools.

## **Ethical Behavior**

Candidates are required to become versed in the ethical standards associated with the school counseling profession. They must also develop the ability to automatically apply ethical standards to all aspects of their professional role.

- **How do candidates reflect on their own dispositions and are able to adjust if needed (e.g., professional development plans, mid-point assessment)?**

Candidates develop the above stated dispositions through a process of being exposed to specific coursework and then reflecting on their acquisition of the associated knowledge through written assignments, class participation, classroom and laboratory exercises. Throughout this process candidates are given constructive feedback which helps them not only acquire the necessary knowledge but also to develop the dispositions needed to value these perspectives and utilize them to enhance student learning. Candidates are encouraged to reflect on their own dispositions and the ones they are to develop during class discussions and summary sections of written course work. Candidates will in the future be able to reflect on the laboratory evaluations and other assessment at a mid-point assessment to adjust their dispositions if necessary.

- **How does the admissions process (e.g., essay, interviews) assess candidate dispositions?**

The admission process is based primarily on the ability of faculty to assess the ability of applicants to complete the Master's Degree in School Counseling. Of equal importance, is the assessment of the applicants dispositions about counseling, student learning, and the helping relationship. This assessment take place in a three step press which includes 1) the applicant biographical sketch, 2) the applicant letters of

recommendation, and 3) an examination of previous academic and professional experience. The faculty uses this process to determine if candidates respect diversity, are capable of developing appropriate empathic understanding, and are willing to facilitate change rather than impose it on students. During the applicant's file review, the faculty evaluates the candidate previous experiences and perspectives to determine if the candidates has the potential to develop additional dispositions required by the program.

### **Standard I – Student Learning – All Programs**

- **How do candidates demonstrate their ability to assess student learning (e.g., portfolio, observations, action research, course assignments, reading inventories)?**

All candidates in the School Counseling Program are informed of the importance of the professional school counselor's ability to understand, assess and have an impact on student learning. Candidates are therefore trained based on the premise that student learning is their bottom line and that the school counselor's role in the school is to support learning through the provision of a healthy learning environment. This means that candidates are expected to acquire the skills necessary for developing, implementing and evaluating a developmentally appropriate school counseling program in the K–12 setting. The professional school counselor operates under the assumption that learning is enhanced when students feel safe and supported and are not hindered by emotional problems or poor social interactions. Therefore, assessment of student learning is not restricted to analyzing student academic outcome data but also includes needs assessments to determine student needs related to academic learning.

Candidates are required to take the course HUDE 225 Advanced Measurement and Evaluation where they learn about the theoretical underpinnings and statistical properties of tests; test administration and interpretation; as and various assessment approaches (i.e. individual and group) and the appropriateness of specific tests with different populations. This course also prepares candidates to conduct formal and informal assessments of student's academic, personal and interpersonal issues that affect learning.

- **How do candidates demonstrate that they can collect, analyze and interpret student data?**

In the course Techniques and Theories of Counseling and Psychotherapy, Candidates are required to conduct a program needs assessment where they must utilized formal and informal methods of assessment in order to identify school or student needs that could become the focus of school counselor led interventions. In this assessment, candidates must provide a rationale for their assessment methods, identify what data are needed, and provide details about who, what when and how this data will be collected. Upon completion of the needs assessment assignment, candidates are then required to describe how they would analyze and interpret their data and make use of the findings.

- **How do candidates demonstrate their understanding of the developmental levels of students, diversity, and the policy context of the school environment?**

Early in their program, candidates are required to take HUDE 201-**Human Growth and Development**, where they learn about development across the life span. Candidates also take Consulting in the Schools which refines their knowledge about development as it relates to learning and school performance and the school environment.

In the courses, HUDE 347 Multicultural Counseling and Psychotherapy, and HUDE 229 Contemporary Issues in School Counseling, candidates are exposed to issues of diversity in which culture, particularly ethnicity, gender, race, class, religion, sexual orientation and other cultural characteristics are discussed. Candidates are expected to incorporate their understanding of culture and learning into their programmatic repertoire of counseling services. Class assignments throughout the program call for candidates to consider and address issues of diversity in conjunction with the associated courses all in relation to student learning. (see standard 4)

In HUDE 240 Introduction to the Profession of Counseling, candidates are taught about the profession of the school counseling. The training requires that they conceptualize their professional role within the larger school context. This includes consideration of administrative policy and personnel.

- **How do candidates demonstrate that they can create environments to support student learning?**

Course assignments in the culminating experience, HUDE 345 **Internship in School Counseling**, require candidates to produce a portfolio that includes audio-taped counseling sessions and consultation meetings. These assignments are designed to assess how well candidates can enhance student learning. Another assignment requires that candidates identify and implement a program or intervention that is based on formal and informal needs assessment. Faculty in this course evaluate candidate performance based on among other criteria, on the effectiveness of the intervention at enhancing some aspect of student learning, directly or indirectly.

### **Standard I – Professional Knowledge and Skills**

Based on the professional knowledge and skills standards of CACREP and the conceptual framework of the School of Education, the School Counseling Program curriculum exposes candidates to the following aspects of professional school counseling.

## **Foundations of School Counseling**

Candidates are required to understand the history, philosophy and current trends in school counseling programs. Candidates are also responsible for understanding thoroughly the role and function of school counselors particularly in relation to other school instruction and support personnel in the school. Candidates must be able to understand the relationship between school counseling programs and academic and other student services in the school. Candidates must understand how school counselors provide leadership to enhance the learning environment of schools. Based on knowledge of the school setting and the pre-K-12 curriculum, candidates are aware of the role of community, environmental and instructional opportunities and barriers to learning. Special attention is given to the ACA and ASCA codes of ethics (CACREP, 2001).

## **Contextual Dimensions of School Counseling**

Candidates must become aware of larger contextual issues which affect the school community. This requires that candidates demonstrate that they can coordinate programs that utilize collaboration, referrals, team-building efforts with parents, teachers, administrators, support personnel and community based resources. This also includes the ability to produce professional presentations to other stakeholders regarding school counseling program elements and outcomes. A critical component of this element is the understanding of systems and systems theory as they relate to student learning and to families as stakeholders within schools.

## **Knowledge and Skills Requirements for School Counselors**

Candidates demonstrate a thorough understanding of three core areas of knowledge and skill requirements for school counselors.

### **○ Program Development, Implementation and Evaluation**

Through the use of data and the mastery of content knowledge and skills, candidates must demonstrate the ability to plan, implement and evaluate comprehensive developmental school counseling programs. This is based on the *ASCA National Standards for School Counseling Programs* (ASCA, 2002). This component also requires that candidates are prepared to develop an action plan for their school counseling program that is designed to meet the learning objectives of the school and its stakeholders.

### **○ School Counseling and Guidance**

Candidates are expected to demonstrate individual and group counseling to assist students with achieving the academic, personal, social, and career objectives. This should be guided by the key knowledge basis (i.e. theories). This also includes the use of systems theories and relationships among and between community, family, and school systems.

○ **Consultation**

Candidates obtain a thorough understanding of the need for and process of consultation strategies among all school stakeholders.

**Clinical Instruction**

Candidates obtain 700 clock hours of clinical experience in a public school setting supervised by a certified practicing school counselor. Candidates must accomplish a set of clearly defined learning activities during the internship experience, which takes place over the course of two university academic semesters.

**Table 2. Coursework that reflects Professional Knowledge and Skills**

<b>Knowledge or Skill Element</b>	<b>Point of Acquisition</b>	<b>Method of Acquisition</b>	<b>Exhibit #</b>
<b>Foundations</b>	<b>HUDE 240 Introduction to the Profession of Counseling</b>	-Literature Review -Program Development Exercise	
<b>Context</b>	<b>HUDE 346 Counseling in Schools K-12, HUDE 229 Contemporary Issues in School Counseling</b>	-Team Problem Solving Exercise -Process Papers Midterm & Final Exams	
<b>Knowledge and Skills</b>	<b>HUDE 241 Techniques and Theories of Counseling and Psychotherapy, HUDE 243 Organization &amp; Administration of Counseling Services</b>	-Literature Review -Program Development Exercise; Team Problem Solving Exercise -Process Papers Midterm & Final Exams	
<b>Clinical Instruction</b>	HUDE Internship in School Counseling	-Audio Tapes Of Counseling Sessions & Consultations  -Case Studies Group Counseling Journal -Practicum Log -Site Visits	

