Juvenile Justice System Students: A Social Justice Advocacy Approach for School Counselors

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School counseling is often absent in discussions concerning students in the juvenile justice system. However, school counselors are uniquely positioned to play a vital role in the successful reentry of these students back into the school setting. Working from a social justice advocacy perspective, school counselors can work within the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model in addressing the needs of juvenile justice students. This article explores the literature on juvenile justice system students and highlights broad strategies for school counselors intervening at the client/student level using the American Counseling Association (ACA) Advocacy Competencies as a guide. Roles and responsibilities for school counselors are examined along with implications for school counselors, counselor educators, and future research.

Keywords: juvenile justice system, advocacy, school counseling

Today's schools are complex systems that are under constant pressure to address demands related to academic achievement, accountability, school safety, and the specific needs of students. Without proper support from within school systems or justice systems, students who have gone through the juvenile justice system may encounter challenges and barriers that negatively impact aspects of their academic, career, and personal/social development. In addition, family and community members can be negatively affected when students are unable to navigate the challenges and barriers of post-adjudication. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2012) tasks school counselors to take leadership roles in advocating for all students. School counselors, with their training in counseling, collaboration, student development, and social justice advocacy, are uniquely equipped to provide support to this population of students who work to readjust and reintegrate with their families, schools, and commu-

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nities.

In 2011, 1.5 million individuals 18 and younger were arrested (Puzzanchera, Adams, & Hockenberry, 2013). Of this number, a disproportionate number were African-American and Latino youth. Specifically in 2011, 51% of violent crimes and 35% of property crimes involved African American youth, while their White counterparts constituted 47% and 62% (Puzzanchera et al., 2013). While juvenile arrests have decreased by 31% since 2002, especially in categories such as violent crimes and property crimes, the numbers of students in the juvenile justice system still pose issues that school counselors must be aware of and willing to address. Many of these students are sentenced to detention centers; however others are placed on probation and return to their homes, schools, and communities.

Facilitating a smooth readjustment and reintegration process for juvenile justice system students is critical for increasing their academic achievement and decreasing the likelihood of further delinquency and recidivism (Bloomberg, Bales, & Piquero, 2012; Feierman, Levick, & Mody, 2010; Goldkind, 2011; Sander et al., 2011). Helping this population to obtain a quality education is viewed as the most accessible and reliable route to a productive future (Goldkind, 2011; Feierman et al., 2010; Oudekerk, Chauhan, & Reppucci, 2012; Sander et al., 2011). However, in many cases students in the juvenile justice system fail to achieve academically due to academic and intellectual deficits (Oudekerk et al., 2012). Overall, only 12% of previously incarcerated juvenile offenders will graduate from high school or receive a GED (Biddle, 2010). This level of academic attainment among this population constitutes a social justice issue that must be addressed by school counselors who work from within a comprehensive developmental school counseling program.

Social Justice

In addressing such issues as low academic achievement among this population, a firm understanding of social justice is needed. Social justice within education refers to promoting access, respect, and fairness in facilitating educational success and the overall well being of students (Sander et al., 2011). Access to resources, being treated with respect, and the application of fairness are at the cornerstone of social justice within an educational setting.

For counselors, the American Counseling Association (ACA) Advocacy Competencies serve as a foundation for social justice advocacy (Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2002). Fairness, equity, and access are consistent themes throughout the entire counseling profession as well. In seeking to define social justice within the field of counseling, Steele (2008) focuses on the use counseling services that include identifying and addressing social policies and practices that negatively impact individuals from marginalized backgrounds. Within school counseling, Ratts and Hutchins (2009) emphasize addressing the "causes and effects" of systemic oppression on the lives of students. In a more comprehensive fashion, Bemak and Chung (2008) highlight social justice advocacy among school counselors as working to improve educational outcomes by ensuring fair

treatment, access to opportunities and resources, and working to right injustices among students where variables such as race and socioeconomic status are linked to disparities in achievement. Based on the definitions of social justice and social justice advocacy within education, counseling, and school counseling, the following operational definition is offered:

> Social justice advocacy is a construct that includes working to remove barriers to opportunities and positive educational outcomes among marginalized students by engaging in practices founded on respect, and fairness, ensuring access to resources and opportunities, and by working to right injustices.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2010) reinforces this definition in its ethical mandate for school counselors to actively engage in strategies that help to close the achievement, opportunity, and attainment gaps. Although disparities are well documented, these issues involving juvenile justice students are often not highlighted as areas of concern among school counselors. The purpose of this manuscript is to bring about awareness regarding the needs and issues that face juvenile justice students and to highlight how broad social justice advocacy strategies at the student level can be incorporated into the practice of school counselors within the framework of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model.

Juvenile Justice Students

Youth who commit crimes and who engage in patterns of behaviors considered maladaptive and antisocial are routinely bestowed labels with potentially negative connotations. "Juvenile delinquent," is a common legal term used in referring to a minor that has been adjudicated by the juvenile justice system (Scott et al., 2002). The term "adjudicated youth" also refers to youth having been adjudicated by the juvenile justice system. Many assume that adjudicated youth are incarcerated or detained in juvenile detention or correctional programs. Scott et al. (2002) indicate that many adjudicated youth are not incarcerated or detained, but are instead involved in a variety of dispositions that range from referral treatment services, day treatment programs, and psychiatric hospitalization. As such, the term, "juvenile justice students" refers to individuals who are under the age of majority, who have violated the law or committed some offense, and who are under the jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system in some capacity (detention or probation).

The U.S. Department of Justice reported that in 2008, 66% of youth who were arrested were referred to juvenile court; others were either released, referred to social services agencies, or other police agencies (Puzzanchera, 2009). Toward the beginning of 2010 nearly 71,000 individuals under the age of 21 were in residential facilities (Hockenberry, 2013). Demo-graphic and behavioral characteristics include ethnic minority status, aggressive or antisocial behavior, difficulties and failure in school, family

stresses (e.g., poverty, single parent home, physical and substance abuse) and high crime communities (Scott et al., 2002). These youths, whether having spent time in correctional facilities or not, must successfully reintegrate with their families, schools, and communities per the orders of judges, and under the supervision of probation officers and social services or aftercare workers (Goldkind, 2011).

The population of juvenile justice youth is overwhelmingly comprised of individuals from racial minority backgrounds (Barbarin, 2010; Goldkind, 2011). The disproportionate representation of racial minority youth in the juvenile justice system constitutes a social justice issue premised on unequal application of juvenile laws and punishment.

Family Systems

Students in the juvenile justice system are often part of family systems that experience a multitude of negative circumstances. Parental incarceration, physical abuse, substance abuse, and poverty are factors that contribute to students matriculating through the juvenile justice system (Goldkind, 2011; Petsch & Rochlan, 2009; Scott et al., 2002). It is estimated that 50 percent of students in the juvenile justice system in the U.S. have a parent in the adult correctional system (Mumola, 2000). Having an incarcerated parent or household member not only facilitates, social and economic adversity, but also increases the likelihood of adverse educational outcomes (Nichols & Loper, 2012). Specifically, emotional withdrawal, low self-esteem, and anti-social behaviors among students are consequences of parental incarceration. It has been found that these forms of abuse and neglect can increase the odds of juvenile delinquency by almost 60% (Widom & Maxfield, 2001). Finally, the positive correlation between substance abuse and crime/delinquency for this population is well documented, with 2 million students aged 12-17 being reported as needing treatment for alcohol and drug problems (Ruiz, Stevens, Fuhriman, Bogart, & Korchmaros, 2009).

Mental Health

The prevalence of diagnosable mental health disorders among students in the juvenile justice system is estimated to be as high as 70% (Schubert, Mulvey, & Alderfer, 2011; Kapp, Petr, Robbins, & Choi, 2013). A study with a sample of 1,829 juvenile detainees found that 66.3% of males and 73.8% of females met the criteria for at least 1 diagnosable mental health disorder (Teplin et al., 2006). Another study conducted by Whitted, Delavega, and Lennon-Dearing (2013), with a sample of 670 juvenile participants, identified 84% with conduct problems and over 50% with peer and emotional problems. If juvenile justice students are to have successful outcomes, their presenting mental health issues will have to be addressed in a meaningful and targeted manner. School counselors, with their specialized training in counseling, collaboration, and assessment, are well positioned facilitate the helping process for juvenile justice students through the identification and referral processes.

School System

Whether reentering their communities and schools following detention within the justice system or being referred to treatment services or day treatment programs, juvenile justice students are required to attend school. In spite of studies that indicate students in the juvenile justice system are more likely to success-fully reenter their communities and schools if they are engaged in work and/or school, there are several factors that present challenges to successful reentry (Bullis, Yovanoff, Mueller, & Havel, 2002; Clark & Unruh, 2010). Within the school system juvenile justice students have often been the recipients of exclusionary practices upon returning to their school communities (Feierman et al., 2010; Sander et al., 2011). Many of these practices begin with "zero tolerance" policies that lead to students, especially those from racial minority backgrounds, being excluded from "regular schooling" at disproportionate rates (Skiba et al., 2011). Feierman et al. (2010) highlight that some schools view juvenile justice students as a safety threat, while others feel pressure to exclude these students based on fears of poor academic performance in general, and more specifically poor performance on standardized tests. Other factors that may lead to exclusionary practices include more technical issues such as incomplete enrollment documents from those students who were in state custodial care, vocational programs not allowing mid-semester or mid-year entrance, and school districts failing to accept credits from students who earned credit while in detention facilities.

Social Justice Concerns

Social justice concerns among students in the juvenile justice system include disparities in discretionary disciplinary referrals and school policies such as "zero tolerance" (Sander et al., 2011). Zero tolerance came about as a result of the "War on Drugs" and can best be described as a "philosophy or policy that mandates the application of predetermined consequences, most often severe and punitive in nature, that are intended to be applied regardless of the gravity of behavior, mitigating circumstances, or situational context" (Skiba et al., 2006, p. 852). These policies, which rely heavily on exclusionary discipline, have disproportionately impacted ethnic minority students, specifically African American and Latino males, and students with mental health diagnoses, leading to widening gaps in achievement (Teske, 2011).

Exclusionary discipline and the widening gap in achievement inevitably lead to the overrepresentation of African American and Latino students in the juvenile justice system (Robbins, 2005; Villarruel & Dunbar, 2006). Low educational attainment often overlaps the disproportionate number of minority students in the juvenile justice system, further highlighting the need for advocates within the educational system. This is further complicated when this population of students have limited resources and access to alternative education programs (Robbins, 2005; Villarruel & Dunbar, 2006). For school counselors, acknowledging and identifying disparities and issues of inequality and inequity is one of the first steps in working from a social justice advocacy perspec-

tive (Bemak & Chung, 2008; Ratts & Hutchins, 2009; Sander et al., 2011). Working from this perspective, it is important for school counselors to have some understanding of the juvenile justice system and the challenges that many face regarding their families, mental health, and the school system. An awareness of these areas can aid in identifying social justice advocacy strategies that fit within the framework of the ASCA National Model.

ACA Advocacy Competencies

In addressing areas that present challenges for juvenile justice students, school counselors must begin with an advocacy approach. The ACA Advocacy Competencies advance a structured approach to advocacy within the field of counseling. Counselors who engage in advocacy work focus on three levels: client/student, school/community, and public arena (Lewis et al., 2002). Each level of advocacy is further organized into two domains, advocacy "with" and advocacy "on behalf" of an individual. School counselors must especially work with juvenile justice students at the individual student level making sure to work with and on behalf of each student. Advocating at this level gives the school counselor the opportunity to remove barriers and address issues of access, opportunity, and inequity that hinder students from this population from reentering schools and their communities successfully.

At the core of working from an advocacy perspective is multicultural competence (Constantine & Yeh, 2001; Holcomb-McCoy, 2004). Because the population of juvenile justice students is disproportionately comprised of students from racially diverse backgrounds, and because social justice involves issues of equity, equality, and access, it is imperative that school counselors be aware of their own cultural worldviews and how they might influence their work with this population. It is equally important for school counselors to obtain the cultural knowledge and skills needed for working with these students and their families. By engaging in culturally sensitive, fair, and respectful practices, school counselors can advocate in a manner that reduces risk factors that keep their students in the juvenile justice system (Ratts, Dekruyf, & Chen-Hayes, 2007).

Client/Student Level

The client/student component of advocacy takes place on an individual level. This level of advocacy includes two domains: student empowerment and student advocacy. At this level school counselors are able to recognize the impact of sociopolitical and socioeconomic forces that negatively impact the development of students. Through direct counseling, school counselors incorporate empowerment strategies to help students understand their lives and circumstances in context. School counselors also serve as advocates who work to remove barriers that can contribute to negative interpersonal and intrapersonal outcomes. Advocacy within these domains occur with the student and/or on behalf of the student.

Student Empowerment

Empowerment is a process by which the "powerless and marginalized" become aware of the power dynamics in their life contexts and develop the skills necessary to gain some level of control over their lives (McWhirter, 1998). To this end, the student empowerment domain involves advocacy with the individual student in an effort to bring about awareness and equip them with skills needed to re-gain control over their lives. Lewis et al. (2002) put forth empowerment competencies that include: (a) identifying student strengths and resources; (b) recognizing the impact of cultural, sociopolitical, and socioeconomic forces on student development; (c) recognizing internalized oppression; (d) helping the student to identify external barriers; (e) equipping students with self-advocacy skills; and (f) developing and helping to carry out student self-advocacy action plans. These empowerment competencies are geared toward helping students to find their voice and can play an active role in bringing about positive change in their lives.

School counselors can work with juvenile justice system students by engaging in the student empowerment domain and by incorporating the empowerment competencies highlighted by Lewis et al. (2002) into aspects of their school counseling programs. For school counselors the empowerment competencies can be infused into a comprehensive development school counseling program that offers strong direct services. Direct services with an empowerment focus can be infused and incorporated into the school counseling core curriculum, individual student planning, and responsive services.

The *school counseling core curriculum* is the planned instructional program that is comprehensive, developmental, and preventative in scope (ASCA, 2012). The core curriculum is primarily delivered through systematic classroom guidance lessons (ASCA, 2012). Specifically, guidance lessons can allow the school counselor to reach both identified and non-identified students who have experiences within the juvenile justice system. In addition, engaging in the empowerment strategy of helping students to identify strengths and resources is in line with current efforts within the school counseling profession to work from a strengths-based perspective (Galassi, Griffin, & Akos, 2008). By infusing the core curriculum with strengths-based approaches carried out through classroom guidance, school counselors can actively work to empower all students, especially juvenile justice system youth, in their development and ability to advocate on behalf of themselves.

Classroom guidance lessons infused with strengths-based approaches can specifically promote character strengths and pro-social behavior. In focusing on traits that help students become successful in school, Park and Peterson (2008) describe how academic achievement is influenced by factors other than intelligence (e.g., character traits). Helping students to identify and develop character strengths can have a positive influence on overall achievement. Deficits in character strengths have been found in juvenile justice youth at dispro-portionate rates, which has contributed to significant challenges in various aspects of their lives (Park & Peterson, 2008; Schubert et al., 2011). Likewise, promoting pro-social behavior is a strengths-based approach that can be used

to empower and equip this population of students with needed empowerment skills as well. Day-Vines and Terriquez (2008) identified the importance of school counselors implementing strengths-based strategies that foster pro-social behavior in helping students in their academic, personal/social, and career development.

Table 1 describes specific classroom guidance topics that focus on fostering character strengths and pro-social behavior. Infusing these factors and others within the core curriculum of a school counseling program can empower juvenile justice students in a manner that fosters a successful transition back into the school and their communities. Doing so also facilitates the process of equipping these students with self-advocacy skills and the ability to recognize the socio-cultural, political, and economic impacts on their lives (Astramovich & Harris, 2007).

Individual student planning (ISP) is another service offered through a comprehensive school counseling program that aids in the empowerment of students in the juvenile justice system. ISP involves systemic activities that help students establish goals and create plans for academic success (ASCA, 2012). Working with students in creating and carrying out their academic plans is also an avenue where their self-advocacy action plans can be created and carried out (Lewis et al., 2002). Table 1 highlights specific actions that should be taken in helping juvenile justice students during the individual student planning process. Helping students to achieve academically and ultimately graduate from high school through systematic planning is an advocacy approach that can directly impact the high dropout rates of this population upon their return to the school environment (Feierman et al., 2010).

Student empowerment can also be facilitated through responsive services offered in a comprehensive developmental school counseling program. Responsive services are designed to meet the immediate needs of students through individual and group counseling. Interventions used through these services are designed to help students resolve issues in their academic, career, and personal/social development (ASCA, 2012). Working in a school setting, individual and small group counseling is planned, short-term in nature, and goal focused (ASCA, 2012). Individual and group counseling are well suited for facilitating the empowerment strategies of helping students to recognize the impact of sociocultural, economic, and political forces on their development, identify external barriers, identify strengths, and equipping them with self-advocacy skills.

Individual or group counseling can especially be helpful in working with juvenile justice students as they work to integrate back into their schools and communities. The acquisition of a variety of skill sets has been found to be beneficial when fostered among this population of students (Bailey & Ballard, 2006; Kiriakidis, 2008). Finally, in helping juvenile justice students to advocate on their own behalf by empowering them, a focus is needed on fostering self-determination. Self-determination involves students combining the skills, knowledge, and beliefs, that will allow them to engage in behavior that is goal directed and self-regulated. Juvenile justice students who have possessed specific factors related to self-determination have been found to have more positive outcomes (Feinstein, Baartman, Buboltz, Sonnichsen, & Solomon, 2008). Table 1

highlights skills and traits that school counselors must address through individual and small group counseling. Highlighting these areas as focal points in individual and group counseling can help to provide juvenile justice students with the skills needed to advocate on their own behalf and for overall success.

TABLE 1

**Classroom Guidance Topics that Focus on Fostering
Character Strengths and Pro-social Behavior**

Student Empowerment	Advocate with
Core Curriculum	School counselors incorporate into the core curriculum topics that form the foundation for empowering students. They then use their expertise in classroom guidance lessons on strengths based topics that promote self-advocacy. Topics for guidance lessons should include: 1. Character strengths (perserverance, gratitude, and hopefulness). 2. Pro-social behavior (resiliency, social competenece, and personal accountability 3. Academic skill sets (organization and study skills acquisition).
Individual Student Planning	School counselors use their knowledge and skills in academic and career planning to work with students and families in the following areas: 1. Establishing academic and career goals and plans (focus should be on providing supports to help juvenile justice students "catch-up" academically). 2. Identifying barriers to academic plans and goals using a solution focused approach. 3. Building self-advocacy action plans (work with juvenile justice students to adjust their reentry strategies, academic schedules, and or supports in attaining their goals).
Responsive Services	In aiding juvenile justice students in their transition back into the school environment, school counselors are uniquely positioned to work with students through individual counseling. Through individual counseling school counselors might use Cognitive-Behavioral, Re-

ality, or Solution-focused counseling approaches in working with students in the following areas:

1. Focus on building and strengthening interpersonal, problem-solving, and negotiation skills.
2. Focus on developing and using coping skills (anger management, stress/anxiety management, and respecting authority).

School counselors use their expertise of group counseling to offer small group counseling services specifically geared toward juvenile justice students. Small groups should focus on the following:

1. Building or strengthening resiliency and empowerment skills.
2. Improving decision-making skills and self-esteem.
3. Promotion of positive values and building a positive identity.

Student Advocacy

The student advocacy domain is also a part of the client/student level of advocacy and involves advocating on behalf of the student (Lewis et al., 2002). School counselors are especially equipped for this level of advocacy, as it is a prominent component of their training and is highlighted as one of the major themes of the ASCA National Model (2012). Ratts and Hutchins (2009) highlight that school counselors are specifically trained to understand and address lifespan development issues, to exhibit multicultural and social justice competence, and to serve as systemic change agents. The ASCA National Model (2012) highlights that school counselors specifically serve in the role of advocate to "ensure equity and access for all students to reach their full potential in K-12 schools and beyond" (p. 14). In advocating on behalf of students, school counselors employ the following strategies: negotiate relevant services and education systems, help students gain access to needed resources, identify barriers, develop a plan of action for confronting barriers, identify potential allies, and carry out plans of action (Lewis et al., 2002).

Advocating on behalf of students using the aforementioned strategies could involve the school counselor being pitted against highly entrenched and resistant structures within the school system. It is imperative for school counselors to build and maintain alliances and partnerships with stakeholders in working to overcome institutional barriers and the perpetuation of the status quo through exclusionary policies and practices. Identifying concrete sources of support is critical to the process of helping students. These skills and strategies are essential in facilitating successful outcomes for juvenile justice youth and can be carried out through indirect student services.

For school counselors, indirect student services are delivered through referrals, consultation, and collaboration (ASCA, 2012). School counselors use their positions to negotiate relevant services and education systems on behalf of students and their families (Ratts & Hutchins, 2009). When juvenile justice system students and their families lack resources, school counselors make *referrals* for additional assistance. Table 2 highlights details for referrals when working with juvenile justice students. Making appropriate referrals can be especially important in helping to decrease rates of recidivism and in helping juvenile justice students to successfully integrate back into school and their communities.

Collaboration is a means by which school counselors can identify barriers, develop a plan of action for confronting barriers, identify potential allies, and carry out plans of action. In working within this capacity, school counselors must be the "ever-present" voice that makes sure the needs of students are recognized and addressed (ASCA, 2012). In doing so, school counselors work with parents, students, other educators, and the community to address challenges such as exclusionary practices and disciplinary policies that disproportionately affect minority populations, and to ensure that juvenile justice students have all that is needed administratively to re-enter their schools. These issues might be addressed through teaming/partnering, serving on school/district committees, and through holding workshops and sessions for parents. Using these mediums to foster collaboration gives the school counselor the opportunity to ensure "equity and access" for all students. Table 2 identifies individual aspects of collaboration that school counselors engage in while working on behalf of juvenile justice students.

Consultation is another mechanism by which school counselors can advocate on behalf of juvenile justice students by providing expertise on a variety of factors (e.g., developmental and environmental factors) that play a role in their ability to readjust and achieve. As a consultant, school counselors are able to share their problem solving expertise, knowledge of normal and abnormal development, and skills for bringing about change with other stakeholders. Through the consultation process barriers can be identified and addressed, and plans of action can be created and carried out that are specifically geared toward helping juvenile justice students address challenges that they may encounter within the school setting. Table 2 highlights specific areas where school counselors serve as consultants on behalf of juvenile justice students. As a consultant who advocates on behalf of the student, school counselors are uniquely equipped to identify and receive information regarding student needs so that appropriate strategies can be created to promote the success of the student (ASCA, 2012).

TABLE 2

Specific Areas where School Counselors Serve as Consultants on Behalf of Juvenile Justice Students

Student Advocacy	Advocate on Behalf
Referrals	School counselors recognize their scope of practice and work to connect juvenile justice students and their families with appropriate support services. 1. Use the referral process to refer students and families to mental health agencies, drug treatment programs, academic support programs, and employment training programs as needed.
Collaboration	School counselors use their expertise in collaboration to work on behalf of students in the following areas: 1. Collaboration with parents on enrollment issues and transfer credit. 2. Team and partner with administration and teachers to identify and address the unique needs of juvenile justice students. 3. Collaborate with all stakeholders to address barriers caused by policies and procedures within each school and the entire school system. 4. Collaboration with progation officers, social workers, and community leaders is needed to build multi-level support of juvenile justice students.
Consultation	School counselors consult with parents/guardians to provide them with parenting and academic strategies for helping students at home. Strategies include: 1. Consulting with teachers and administrators to conduct workshops and make presentations to bring about awanress of the social justice issue of disproportionality and the challenges that face juvenile justice students as they attempt to reenter school. 2. Provide all stakeholders with information on stduents' personal/social development and its importance to positive academic outcomes among juvenile justice students.

Discussion

Working from a social justice perspective, while incorporating the student level of the ACA Advocacy Competencies in working with juvenile justice students , has implications for both school counselors and counselor educators. For school counselors, it means identifying juvenile justice students within their schools and working to ensure that these students receive equitable access to resources and opportunities (Dixon, Tucker, & Clark, 2010). This framework puts school counselors in a position where they need to use the components of their comprehensive developmental school counseling programs to provide services that can directly impact the success of this sub-population of students. Working from a social justice advocacy perspective is necessary to empower juvenile justice students and their families in overcoming challenges and the stigma associated with being involved with the juvenile justice system.

For counselor educators, the ACA Advocacy Competencies and working from a social justice perspective can influence teaching and scholarship. Regarding teaching, infusing the Advocacy Competencies throughout the training curriculum of school counselors allows trainees an opportunity to become familiar with the roles and responsibilities of a social justice oriented advocate. It also allows trainees the opportunity to practice social justice oriented advocacy strategies that will be incorporated into their future school counseling programs. Ratts and Hutchins (2009) suggest that the infusion of the Advocacy Competencies allows trainees the opportunity to practice advocacy roles and responsibilities at the micro and macro levels of advocacy. For example, school counseling students in a multicultural counseling course can learn how to incorporate the Advocacy Competencies with culturally appropriate counseling strategies. Culturally appropriate counseling strategies are critical in working with a population that is disproportionately from racial minority and low socioeconomic backgrounds (Barbarin, 2010). These trainees can then put what is learned to practice during their practicum and internship experiences by focusing on advocacy at the student level, but also expanding their focus to advocacy at the school/community and public arena levels (Ratts & Hutchins, 2009). Infusing the Advocacy Competencies throughout school counselor education programs with a social justice perspective ensures that students are aware of and understand the challenges that juvenile justice students face regarding equity, opportunity, and access, and are equipped to develop the skills needed to assist in these areas.

Scholarly research also needs to be conducted on the Advocacy Competencies and how they are incorporated into school counseling practice while working with juvenile justice students. Conducting research on where and how the Advocacy Competencies can have the most positive impact in working with juvenile justice students can help to increase the validity and reliability of the Advocacy Competencies as a whole, and the validity and reliability of school counseling interventions that incorporate social justice advocacy strategies. Research in these areas can help to inform best practice by providing evidence of what works. Using evidence-based interventions and strategies

are critical for school counselors who have a responsibility to maintain data-driven accountability practices for their school counseling programs (Dimmit, Carey, & Hatch, 2007). Counselor educators engaged in research in these areas are positioned to assist in this effort.

Conclusion

Although significant challenges face students involved with the juvenile justice system, school counselors are uniquely positioned to aid in addressing these challenges. Working from a social justice perspective while incorporating the ACA Advocacy Competencies into one's practice is one way school counselors can help assist students who face challenges brought on by their involvement with the juvenile justice system. Calls for school counselors to address issues of inequity, access, and oppression are well documented. Concerning juvenile justice students, it is believed that this call can best be answered by school counselors through the Advocacy Competencies, a social justice perspective, and a willingness to stand up for students whose needs are not being met in an adequate manner. The school counselor can be instrumental in helping families, linking to appropriate mental health services, and navigating the policies and procedures within school systems, to help students in their overall development.

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