

**SANTA CRUZ COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION**  
**MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELOR I**

**DEFINITION**

Under general direction, provides prevention and early intervention services that support the behavioral health and well-being of children and youth. Behavioral health and related services may include wellness promotion and education, screening, care coordination, individual and group support, and crisis referral. This position operates as part of a care team and under the direction of a Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) credentialed or licensed professional.

**SUPERVISION EXERCISED**

Exercise no supervision over County Office staff.

**EXAMPLES OF IMPORTANT AND ESSENTIAL DUTIES**

Acts as a liaison between families and service systems, identifying relevant programs and supporting clients (families, caregivers, and students) in accessing healthcare and community resources through a client-centered approach.

Provides psychoeducation, system navigation, crisis management (including de-escalation, safety planning, and referral), coping skills, and motivational interviewing.

Engages and supports children and youth in culturally, linguistically, and age-appropriate services, demonstrating cultural humility, competence, and inclusivity in all interactions.

Supports youth in skills training, repetition, and practicing skills learned in higher-level care under the supervision of qualified individuals.

Provides mental health literacy (e.g., symptom recognition, help-seeking strategies, how to provide support).

Teaches life skills (e.g., stress management, time management, problem-solving), behavior activation, including identifying, engaging in, and evaluating activities that promote positive emotions and well-being.

Supports overcoming maladaptive thinking patterns identified in higher-level care.

Teaches distraction strategies, including demonstrating and practicing how to redirect attention to enjoyable activities, mindfulness, or sensory techniques to shift focus.

Teaches emotional regulation, including recognizing and understanding emotions and using strategies to regulate them in a healthy, adaptive manner.

Collaborates with the Santa Cruz County Office of Education, county healthcare systems, school staff, and community agencies to identify resources and provide services to meet client needs.

Administers universal screening programs in schools or other community-based organizations per Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) guidelines under the direction of qualified professionals.

Develops and maintains collaborative working relationships with community partners.

Assists clients in navigating healthcare systems, including Medi-Cal enrollment and external agency referrals.

**EXAMPLES OF IMPORTANT AND ESSENTIAL DUTIES (CONTINUED)**

Initiates and tracks mental health and wellness service registrations.

Provides care coordination and support in various settings, including school sites, community agencies, and homes.

Organizes and conducts family/caregiver education classes on mental health and wellness, social-emotional skills, and tools to empower families and caregivers to make informed decisions for their children in collaboration with the School Based Mental Health & Wellness team.

Creates opportunities and events that amplify community voices and increase client engagement in school and community support services.

Implements strategies to advocate on behalf of communities served to enact systems-level change and identifies challenges to addressing system-wide inequities.

Assists and engages clients in overcoming barriers to accessing services.

Facilitates education, training, and awareness opportunities to reduce the stigma of mental health services.

Completes documentation and maintains accurate records.

Maintains confidentiality of information related to students, families, caregivers, and providers.

Attends and participates in meetings, trainings, and conferences as assigned.

Perform related duties and responsibilities as assigned.

**JOB-RELATED AND ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS**

**Knowledge of:**

Tools and strategies related to mental health, truancy prevention, family systems, positive behavior interventions, and public health-inspired prevention models.

Navigating public health systems.

Principles and practices used in dealing with staff, students, families and outside agencies.

Proper English usage, spelling, vocabulary, grammar and punctuation.

Modern office practices, methods, computer equipment and software.

Wellness promotion and education (e.g., individual skills training, building positive relationships, bullying prevention, nutrition and exercise in relation to behavioral health, Check-In/Check-Out).

Identifying and referring behavioral health needs of youth to behavioral health providers in school or organizational settings.

Community resources and services related to health, mental health, and education.

Social services or healthcare systems enrollment processes and procedures.

**Knowledge of (continued):**

Culturally sensitive practices.

Applicable state and federal codes, laws, and regulations, including HIPAA, related to school-based mental health services.

The needs of historically underserved populations and factors affecting the delivery of mental health services.

Standard clerical procedures, filing systems, and record-keeping tools.

Standard software applications including video conferencing platforms.

Supporting youth in completing behavioral health screenings.

Care coordination and extension.

Providing additional support to caregivers, school personnel, or behavioral health providers, including non-clinical or clinical administrative tasks.

Delivering structured curriculum to small groups to enhance wellness and life skills.

Crisis assessment and referral.

**Skill and Ability to:**

Demonstrate inclusion and respect for the individuality of all clients and partners.

Demonstrate cultural humility, awareness, and sensitivity.

Recognize the complexity of cultural diversity in light of psychological knowledge.

Collaborate with partner agencies to develop a system of support for clients.

Identify resources to meet client needs and connect them with these resources.

Work independently with minimal supervision.

Communicate effectively, orally and in writing.

Interpret and apply laws, rules, and regulations.

Prepare clear written communications and make oral presentations.

Engage in group collaboration and team participation.

Present ideas clearly and concisely.

Operate a computer and use standard software applications.

Organize, track, and retrieve data.

Adapt to changing situations and needs.

Organize and prioritize work effectively.

Maintain professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication.

**Skill and Ability to (continued):**

Be courteous and maintain a neat and clean appearance, and demeanor at all times.

**EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE**

*Any combination equivalent to experience and training that would provide the required knowledge, skills, and abilities would be qualifying. A typical way to obtain the knowledge, skills, and abilities would be:*

**Education:**

Completion of a Bachelor's degree or equivalent in counseling, social work, psychology, or a related field from an accredited college or university.

**Experience:**

Two years of experience in a government agency, community-based organization, educational or healthcare setting is desirable.

Experience supporting and connecting families, caregivers, or students in accessing public health or education systems in a home, community, or school setting.

Experience in case management and direct counseling with a diverse population of students and families, including at-risk youth.

**License or certificate:**

Possession of, or ability to obtain, an appropriate, valid California driver's license and appropriate vehicle operation insurance.

**Qualification Requirements**

To perform a job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed in the job description are representative of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

**SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS**

*The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform essential functions. Essential duties require the following physical skills and work environment:*

Ability to work in a classroom and office environment with the ability to sit, stand, walk, kneel, crouch, stoop, squat, twist, reach, and lift 25 pounds; exposure to volatile and assaultive behavior; exposure to outdoors.

Ability to speak in both English and Spanish or a target language is highly preferred.

Ability to travel to different sites and locations in personal automobile.

**Approval Date:** December 17, 2024