

UNH Research Finds U.S. School Districts Don't Have Enough Counselors

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DURHAM, N.H. – Less than 20 percent of school districts in the U.S. meet the recommended student-to-school counselor ratio of 250:1 or lower, according to new research from the Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire. The median ratio is 411:1.

The researchers found that access to school counselors varies considerably across states. Median ratios are more than 1,000:1 in Arizona and California but under 250:1 in North Carolina, North Dakota, Vermont, New Hampshire and Montana.

Although rural districts are the most likely to lack any school counselors, the median caseload is lower and more than 25 percent of the districts meet the American School Counselor Association recommendations. In cities, only 4.2 percent of districts meet the recommended ratio.

“It is important that states acknowledge the role that school counselors play in improved student outcomes and work toward policy solutions to ensure adequate access to these

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professionals,” the researchers said. “Given the tremendous range of access across the U.S., it seems that some states have more work to do than others.”

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The full report can be found here:

<https://carsey.unh.edu/publication/school-counselors>

The research was conducted by Douglas Gagnon, a vulnerable families research associate at the Carsey School, and Marybeth Mattingly, director of research on vulnerable families at the Carsey School and a research assistant professor of sociology.

The Carsey School of Public Policy conducts research, leadership development, and engaged scholarship relevant to public policy. They address pressing challenges, striving for innovative, responsive, and equitable solutions at all levels of government and in the for-profit and nonprofit sectors.

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