Licensed Professional Counselors Identity Development in School Mental Health Settings

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Workshop Overview

Evolving role of LPCs in school-based mental health

Professional identity formation & ethical collaboration

Integration within multidisciplinary teams

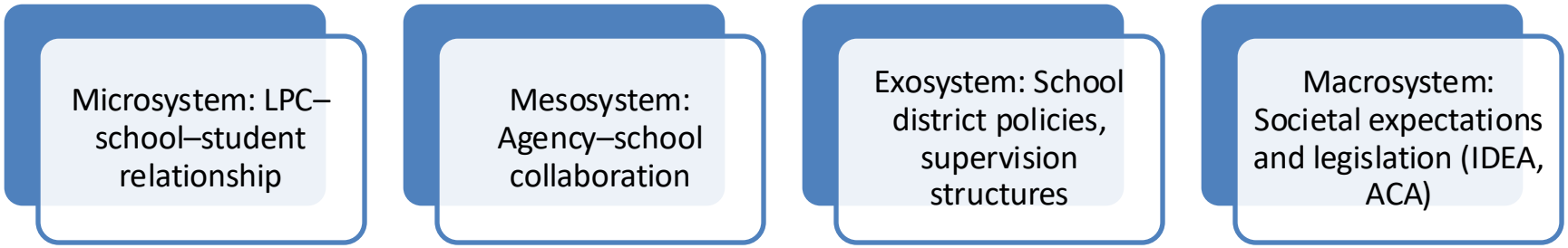
Application of Blanchard’s (2023) dissertation findings

What might be challenges LPCs face when going into the school mental health setting?

Setting the Context

- Rising rates of child/adolescent mental health needs
- Expansion of school-based mental health clinics (SBMHCs)
- Need for LPC integration in school systems
- Identity development crucial for alignment, role development, and advocacy

Viewing Schools and Mental Health through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory



Induction as a Developmental Process

Derived from teacher induction literature (Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Ingersoll, 2012)

Induction = acclimation, mentoring, and identity formation (Blanchard, 2023)

LMHCs 'learn as they go'—supervision and support is key

Key Findings from Blanchard's LPC Induction Study (2023)

Six Major Themes: Navigating Agency, Navigating Schools, Relationship Building, Role Clarification, Clinical Growth, Induction Framework

Identity emerges through supervision, collaboration, and advocacy

Systems literacy strengthens professional identity

Identity Development in Practice

LPCs balance dual allegiance between agency and school

Role ambiguity leads to boundary and confidence challenges

Strong identity promotes ethical advocacy and therapeutic interventions for students

Ethical and Professional Boundaries

Managing confidentiality: FERPA vs. HIPAA

Advocacy while maintaining clear professional roles

Ethical decision-making models (ACA Code, Section A.6.a, B.1.c)

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

- **B.1.c. Respect for Confidentiality** – Counselors protect the confidentiality of information within legal limits.
- **B.2.e. Minimal Disclosure** – Counselors share information only to the extent necessary.
- **B.1.b. Respect for Privacy** – LPCs avoid unwarranted disclosures.
- **B.2.a. Serious and Foreseeable Harm and Legal Requirements** – Clarifies when disclosure is ethically permissible.

Application:
LPCs in schools must navigate **FERPA vs. HIPAA** contexts, determining when and how to share client information ethically. Maintaining minimal disclosure within multidisciplinary teams is central to protecting student privacy while supporting system-wide care.

Multidisciplinary Collaboration

Build rapport with principals, teachers, and school staff

Use consultation and psychoeducation as advocacy tools

Adopt 'shared language' via MTSS approach

Advocacy and Systems Change

- **A.7.a. Advocacy** – Counselors advocate at individual, group, institutional, and societal levels to address barriers and promote access to care.
- **A.1.d. Support Network Involvement** – Counselors respect clients' support systems and advocate for their inclusion.
- **I.1.b. Ethical Decision Making**– Counselors engage in continuous self reflection and ethical decision making to advocate and promote systemic change.

Application:
Findings emphasize LPCs advocating for students' needs within schools and navigating institutional barriers. Advocacy becomes part of the counselor's ethical identity, especially when the school system limits access to equitable mental health care.

Collaboration on Multidiscplinary Teams

- **D.1.c. Cooperation with Other Professionals** – Counselors develop positive working relationships and systems coordination.
- **D.1.g. Employer Policies** – Counselors consider the policy development between school and agency within the operating clinic
- **A.1.a. Primary Responsibility** – The counselor's primary responsibility is to respect the dignity and promote the welfare of clients (students).

Application:
Participants described collaborating with principals, teachers, and agencies as a defining feature of their identity. This ethical foundation affirms that interprofessional cooperation serves student welfare while maintaining the counselor's clinical integrity.

Implications and Closing

- LPCs: Empowerment through self-reflection and advocacy
- Supervisors: Create structured mentorship and induction programs
- School Administration: Develop school mental health policies with key stakeholders
- Counselor Educators: Integrate school mental health into counselor education curriculum
- “Identity is built where systems intersect—agency, school, and self.” – Blanchard (2023)

Thank You!

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References

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