

ABSTRACT

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A STUDY OF SELECT BARRIERS TO GRIEF COUNSELING GROUPS

FOR ADOLESCENTS BY SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS

IN GEORGIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

This study explores select barriers to grief counseling groups for adolescents by Georgia public school social workers. The purpose of this study is to determine if there are select barriers in place in school systems that may prevent school social workers from conducting grief counseling groups within the school setting for adolescents. Seventy five (75) survey participants were selected for the study utilizing non probability convenience sampling from among the participants of the selected Savannah site for the study. The survey participants were composed of school social workers who are members of the state chapter of School Social Workers Association of Georgia (SSWAG) organization, which is the state charter of the larger School Social Workers Association of America (SSWAA), national organization. The research study employed a survey questionnaire entitled *A Study of Barriers to Grief Counseling Groups for Adolescents in School* and a four point continuum Likert scale. The findings of the study indicate that there is no statistical significance between select barriers: amount of time provided during a school day, administrative support, and social work case loads when compared to conducting grief counseling groups.

The data indicates that there is no relationship between the selected barriers and conducting grief counseling groups. However, responding school social workers agree that grief impacts adolescents and interferes with teaching and learning in school and that a comfort level with the topic of grief is required in order to conduct grief counseling groups. The overall findings of this research study indicate that grief counseling groups are underutilized interventions by Georgia public school social workers, who are members of the School Social Workers Association of Georgia organization. Although Georgia public school social workers recognize the importance of grief counseling groups as effective interventions for adolescents, based on the frequency distribution data grief counseling groups are not being conducted at higher levels by school social workers for adolescents.

The findings of this study suggest the following implications:

1. Institutions of higher education should provide a greater emphasis on group counseling curriculum instruction, particularly grief group counseling as a foundational program for Master's level degree social work students.
2. Institutions of higher education should provide a greater emphasis on group counseling training opportunities, particularly grief group counseling for Master's level degree social work students.
3. P-12 public education institutions should encourage school social workers to conduct grief group counseling in schools, as research shows the impact that grief has on adolescents both socially and academically.
4. P-12 public education institutions should also provide school social workers with the time needed to conduct grief group counseling in schools for adolescents.
5. State educational departments should provide more financial resources to rural school systems which would allow for more professional development in the area of grief group counseling, in order to effectively facilitate and conduct grief group counseling interventions for adolescents.
6. State educational departments should provide more financial resources to school systems to hire more school social workers in order to reduce school social work caseloads. This can contribute to more efficient and quality services to students.
7. School social workers should continue to advocate for their profession and recognize the need for a greater emphasis on their development of competencies related to grief counseling group interventions.
8. School social workers must seek and/or create opportunities to increase awareness of the benefits of the school social worker as an integral partner in school leadership and school wide decision making related to appropriate services for students.
9. More research should be conducted on the importance of school social worker roles in providing interventions to students who experience grief.