

Your Question:

You asked about approaches to ensure the quality of college and career advising for secondary school students.

Our Response:

States are taking various approaches to ensure the quality of college and career advising. These include:

- Dedicating staff to college and career advising
- Staff training on developing individual graduation plans
- Connecting individual graduation plans to broader high-quality counseling efforts
- Evaluation of individual graduation plans
- Training for college and career advisors more broadly
- Tapping staff beyond high schools to assist in college and career advising

Dedicating Staff to College and Career Advising

School counselors can (and are) asked to engage in non-counseling activities. To protect counselors' time, some states have taken steps to protect school counselors from being tapped for other duties. For example:

Kentucky [statute](#) defines a "career guidance coach" as a counselor who is assigned 100 percent of their time to:

- The development of students', teachers', and parents' understanding of broad career themes and opportunities through career pathways.
- Academic advising and career counseling.
- Assisting students in the development of individual learning plans.
- Providing assistance to other teachers.

Individual Graduation Plans: Training

Few state policies explicitly mention training for staff who will be assisting students in developing and maintaining individual graduation plans. However:

Colorado regulation [1 CCR 301-81:2.02](#) requires each district to develop an Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) implementation plan. Among other components, the plan must include, where possible, the district's demonstration that professional development is in place for counselors, school administrators, school personnel and/or Approved Postsecondary Service Providers for implementation of the ICAP process.

The Colorado Department of Education [website](#) also provides extensive support materials for ICAP implementation.

Louisiana [statute](#) requires the department of education to provide professional development and in-service training opportunities to school guidance staff on the development of individual graduation plans. These activities must provide information on high-demand, high-skill, high-wage job opportunities that require a certification, associate's

Additional data & links

[Progress of Education Reform: College Counseling in High Schools: Advising State Policy](#)

(Education Commission of the States, December 2014) This report explores what the research says about school practices and counselor attitudes found in high schools sending higher percentages of students to college. It also highlights low-cost, high-impact state approaches and promising state efforts to improve college counseling.

or bachelor's degree, and how a combination of rigorous academic and career-technical education (CTE) courses can prepare students for these fields.

Individual Graduation Plans – Placing in Broader Counseling Context

Individual graduation plans should be connected to more comprehensive counseling supports to maximize their effectiveness. Yet few states explicitly integrate individual graduation plans into broader counseling efforts. However:

Oregon [OAR 581-022-2000](#)(8) requires that a student's education plan be supported by a Comprehensive Guidance Program as defined in [OAR 581-022-2060](#).

Individual Graduation Plans: Evaluation

Relatively few state policies are targeted at evaluating the effectiveness of individual graduation plans and fidelity of their implementation. However:

New Mexico N. M. S. A. § 22-13-1.1 directs the secretary of education to:

- Establish specific accountability standards for administrators, counselors, teachers and district staff to ensure every student has the opportunity to develop a next-step plan
- Monitor compliance with statutory requirements regarding next-step plans
- Compile and annually report information to the legislative education study committee and the governor to evaluate the success of next-step plans.

Colorado regulation [1 CCR 301-81:2.03](#) requires that district policies include a method to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of ICAP standards.

Kentucky [regulation](#) requires districts to develop methods to evaluate the effectiveness and results of the individual learning plan process. The evaluation method must include input from students, parents, and school staff. Evaluation criteria must include indicators related to the student's status in the 12 months following high school graduation.

College and Career Adviser Training

Some states have recently developed professional development programs targeted at providing secondary school counselors with up-to-date information on regional workforce needs. For example:

Texas [V.T.C.A., Education Code § 33.009](#) directs the Center for Teaching and Learning at The University of Texas at Austin to develop and provide postsecondary education and career counseling academies for middle and high school counselors and other postsecondary advisers. Academies must include information on:

- High school diploma endorsements, including course requirements and careers associated with various endorsements
- Methods for a student to earn credit for a course not offered at the student's school
- General academic admissions requirements to state institutions of higher education
- Regional workforce needs, including information about the required education and the average wage/salary for careers that meet those workforce needs
- Effective strategies for engaging students and parents in postsecondary education and career planning, including participation in mentorships and business partnerships.

Utah [U.C.A. § 53A-15-1601](#) creates the Strengthening College and Career Readiness Program, a grant program for LEAs, to improve students' college and career readiness by enhancing school counselors' ability to provide college and career counseling. The legislation directs the state board, in partnership with the State Board of Regents, and business, community, and education stakeholders to develop a certificate that certifies a school counselor is highly skilled at providing college and career counseling, and is aligned with the Utah Comprehensive Counseling and Guidance Program.

The program, subject to legislative appropriation, provides competitive grants to LEAs to pay for courses for counselors to earn the certificate.

Tapping Staff Beyond High Schools to Assist in College and Career Advising

Given the demands on secondary school guidance counselors' time, some states have explored ways to use other trained adults to provide college and career advising.

North Carolina [N.C.G.S.A. § 115D-21.5](#) creates the NC Works Career Coach Program to place community college career coaches in high schools to help students determine career goals and identify community college programs that would allow students to achieve these goals. Under the program, a district and community college that have signed a memorandum of understanding for the placement of career coaches in high schools apply to the state board of community colleges for funds. The application must include evidence that the funding request will be matched dollar-for-dollar with local funds from public or private sources.

Program impact is to be evaluated by assessing:

- Local industry needs
- Current career pathway options available to students in the local area served by the NC Works Career Coaches
 - High school CTE pathway options
 - Community college CTE pathway options
- Increase in pathway enrollment in available options that meet local industry needs
- Career pathway creation and/or career pathway changes made based on local workforce demands
- Long term impact assessment will include a survey of local businesses to determine the success of the program in meeting career pipeline needs.

According to the 2015-2016 (Year One) [report](#) by the North Carolina Community College System, "Ongoing professional development and training will be provided by the North Carolina Community College System Office (NCCCS). NCCCS will work closely with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the North Carolina Department of Commerce and the North Carolina Chamber to ensure that NC Works Career Coaches have the most current information, support, and opportunities to connect with businesses and industries as they serve students in their respective high schools."

Additional details available on the North Carolina Community College System NC Works Career Coach Program [page](#).

The **Arkansas** College and Career Coach program, administered by the Department of Career Education in partnership with the Department of Education and the Department of Higher Education, was launched as a pilot in 2010 and codified in 2013. It provides that college and career coaches, stationed at a higher education institution,

education service cooperative (intermediary district) or nonprofit organization, must offer an array of services to middle and high school students, including:

- Assisting the career orientation instructor with the development of college and career plans for students, beginning in grade 7
- Assisting the school counselor with college and career planning resources and revising college and career plans for each student annually, beginning in grade 9
- Offering high school students college and career planning services and activities that combine counseling on career options and experiential learning with academic planning to assist students with their college and career plans
- Scheduling annual parent sessions, beginning with students in grade 7, to assist parents and students in understanding the college and career planning process
- Providing parents and high school students with information about career and technology education program opportunities available in Arkansas and the level of education and skill required to be successful in various career fields
- Preparing high school students with information and preparation for financing a postsecondary education
- Assisting schools in promoting quality career development for students in grades 7-12
- Supporting middle and high school students in exploring career clusters and selecting an area of academic focus with a cluster of study
- Improving and promoting career development and college planning opportunities within school districts and communities
- Attending continuing education programs on the certified career development facilitator curriculum sponsored by the state
- Coordinating with school counselors and school administrators on career day events, career classes, career programming, college planning, and financial aid activities
- Coordinating community resources and citizens representing diverse occupations to provide career development activities for parents and students
- Assisting with online-based career guidance and college planning systems.

Coaches must have earned a bachelor's degree and hold either a career development facilitator certification or be eligible to complete the required career development facilitator training within one year of hiring.

A.C.A. § 6-1-602 authorizes districts to use national school lunch state categorical dollars to fund the school district's participation. In practice, according to an [Advance CTE blog](#), the program is supported through "federal funding (e.g., TANF, College Challenge Access, and the Workforce Opportunity & Innovation Act)", National School Lunch Act and Perkins funds, and foundation support.

The blog notes that the program is comprised of five components:

- **College and Career Coaches**, who provide career counseling, financial guidance and college and career supports for 7th-12th grade students;
- The **Arkansas Works College and Career Planning System**, an [online tool](#) that allows students to self-assess their career interests and explore different resources and opportunities;
- **ACT Academies**, a summer program to reduce remediation and improve ACT scores for graduating students;
- **Career Cluster® Camps**, hands-on career-exploration opportunities that allow middle and high school students to learn about a wide variety of careers; and
- **Arkansas College Application Campaign**, which encourages students to apply for college during their senior year.

Per A.C.A. § 6-1-605, the Department of Education and the Department of Higher Education are to collect and prepare performance data reports to measure program effectiveness based on measurable benefits to students, including increases in:

- High school graduation rates
- Completion of the Smart Core curriculum
- College attendance rates
- Remediation rates
- Applications for financial aid.

This [Advance CTE blog](#) suggests the Arkansas College and Career Coach program has been effective. Participating “school districts met or exceeded all program performance goals between 2009 and 2015”. The college-going rate and student financial aid applications increased by 22 and 32 percentage points, respectively.