



# Learn More, Read Less

*Quick Professional Learning for School Counselors On-the-Go*

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| <b>Title</b>            | <u><a href="#">When is it Ethical to Inform Administrators about Student Risk-Taking Behaviors? Perceptions of School Counselors</a></u>  |
| <b>Author/Presenter</b> | Michael S. Moyer, Jeremy R. Sullivan, and David Growcock (Professors at University of Texas at San Antonio)                               |
| <b>Summary</b>          | This study surveyed counselors about their beliefs about the ethics of breaking confidentiality to share information with administrators. |
| <b>Topic / Platform</b> | Ethics / Journal Article  |

| Key Takeaways  | Implications for Practice  | Level Considerations  |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Counselors were more likely to break confidentiality if they had personally witnessed a student engaging in a behavior</li> <li>● Counselors were more likely to break confidentiality if the behavior occurred on school grounds, particularly during school hours.</li> <li>● Overall, the highest level of agreement was that confidentiality should be broken with regards to self-harm behaviors.</li> <li>● Counselors were more likely to break confidentiality when a specific policy was in place regarding the behavior.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Manage expectations about confidentiality with your administrator on an ongoing basis, before these concerns arise.</li> <li>● If needed, utilize broader ways of keeping admin “in the loop” like ASCA annual plans and calendars.</li> <li>● ASCA ethical standards indicate that when counselors choose to notify an administrator of something shared in confidence, they should do so in a way that also honors the student’s confidentiality.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This might mean sharing information or behaviors in general terminology without sharing identifying information</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Overall, the study indicated that counselors believed that breaking confidentiality with younger students was more ethical than doing so with older students.</li> <li>● The study found that elementary and middle school counselors were more likely to feel it was ethical to break confidentiality regarding sex and smoking behaviors. This indicated that certain behaviors may be seen as more developmentally appropriate depending on the student’s level.</li> </ul> |

## Fun Fact... Did You Know?

The ASCA Ethical Standards (2016, Section B.2.g) indicate that appropriate officials should be informed about conditions that could be “potentially disruptive or damaging to the school’s mission, personnel and property” while respecting confidentiality to the extent possible. This is open to a lot of interpretation - this is why it is so important to consult!



***Note:** PDs-on-the-Go are intended to convey general information only, and not to provide legal/ethical advice or opinions. When facing an ethical dilemma, it is always best practice to consult with a colleague or supervisor and to document your ethical decision-making process.*

