

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5329



Introduced by: Hon. Keith Micah "Atty. Mike" D.L. Tan

AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING
PROGRAM FOR ALL SCHOOL CHILDREN, INCREASING THE SALARY GRADES
OF GUIDANCE COUNSELORS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article II, Section 13 of the Constitution provides that "The State recognizes the vital role of the youth in nation-building and shall promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being. It shall inculcate in the youth patriotism and nationalism, and encourage their involvement in public and civic affairs."

Pursuant to this, guidance and counseling plays and enormous importance in the holistic development of school children. It serves in fulfilling the basic physiological needs of students and strengthens the educational program of schools.

School's guidance and counseling programs seek to provide for the following:

- Realization of student's potentialities;
- Help children with developing problems;
- Contribute to the development of the school's curriculum;
- Provide teachers with technical assistance; and
- Contribute to the mutual adjustment of students and the school.

Guidance and counseling programs help to promote personal growth and prepare students to become motivated workers and become responsible citizens. It serves as an integral part of a school's total educational program.

Primary importance given to the academic or curricular development in the face of the country's urgent need to improve the quality of education impairs the proper attention that should be given to the mental health of the Filipino youth.

A study entitled “School Violence in the Philippines: A Study on Programs and Policies” reveals that DepEd’s Order No. 40, s. 2012 or the Child Protection Policy, which seeks to safeguard the welfare of school children from all forms of violence, “could be viewed on a perspective that majority of the provisions listed pertain to handling of cases of violence and abuse in schools **more than preventive measures** to strengthen the stakeholders’ capacity to be vigilant against these cases” (*emphasis supplied*).

More importantly, the study in part concludes that, “The most effective (school) interventions appear to be those aimed at improving social and interpersonal skills and modifying attitudes and beliefs” or precisely those very components that a guidance and counseling program would seek to provide.

According to psychologist and leading figure in the counseling field, Dr. Sheila Marie Hocson, there are several causes of mental health issues among young Filipinos. These include: family problem, quarrel with partner, feeling isolated, depression, anxiety, school-related issues, heart break, sexual abuse, and physical abuse.

The lack of awareness among the public and lack of mental health professionals are two of the reasons why mental health among young people are not properly addressed. And unfortunately, a big percentage of young Filipinos did not seek help with regard to their mental health. Most of the time, they confide with close friends instead of parents or mental health professionals. In a 2021 study, 25 percent of young people went to their close friends and 63 percent, unfortunately, did not seek help. Only 7 percent went to their parents, guardians, and other relatives.

Access to mental health professionals is one of the challenges Filipinos face, especially among the youth. According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO), for every 200,000 Filipinos, there are only two mental health professionals (one psychologist and one psychiatrist) available to render service. In the Department of Health’s data, however, there are three mental health professionals (one psychologist, one psychiatrist, and one nurse) for every 100,000 Filipinos. Worse is that there is only one guidance counselor for every 14,000 students. Scarcity of mental health professionals is a problem. As of September 30, 2024, there were more or less 2,700 registered psychologists in the country, and not all of them are into clinical practice. Most of them are into teaching, research, and human resources. Another problem is that there were only 651 registered psychiatrists in the Philippines, highlighting the significant shortage in our mental health workforce.¹

¹<https://www.gmanetwork.com/lifestyle/health-fitness/117800/mental-health-concerns-are-rising-among-filipino-youth/story>

Moreover, despite the immense need for counseling professionals, we have a very limited number of school-based counselors, psychologists and social workers who are serving in our educational institutions, which is unfortunate considering that schools are supposed to be essential partners in caring for the students' mental and emotional health.

The Philippines, under Republic Act No. 9258, otherwise known as the "Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004," provides for a policy of promoting the "improvement, advancement, and protection of the guidance and counseling profession by undertaking and instituting measures that will result in the professional, ethical, relevant, efficient, and effective guidance and counseling services for the development and enrichment of individuals and group lives."

It also recognizes the "important role of guidance counselors in nation-building and promotes the sustained development of a reservoir of guidance counselors whose competence have been determined by honest and credible licensure examinations and whose standards of professional practice and service are world-class and internationally recognized, globally competitive through preventive regulatory measures, programs and activities that foster their continuing professional development."

Guidance and counseling services in schools, however, are being undermined by the scarcity of guidance counselors primarily because of salary issues.

Accordingly, the total number of authorized plantilla Guidance-related items is 4,364 as of February 2025.² Throughout the country, there are only 1,239 Registered Guidance Counselors (RGCs) as of December 2024.³

Hence, this bill seeks to provide not only a comprehensive but a suitable and functional guidance and counseling program for all school children and the hiring and training of additional guidance counselors in order to enable the students to avail of services that will address their mental, emotional and developmental need with the end view of providing a holistic approach to the development and learning of our students.

It also amends RA 9258 in order to hire more school guidance counselors and adequately address the needs of school children, especially those children-at-risk by removing a master's degree in Guidance and Counseling as one of the requirements for licensure examination.

² <https://www.teacherph.com/depd-basic-information-plantilla-positions>

³ <https://www.foi.gov.ph/agencies/prc/number-of-registered-guidance-counselor-in-the-philippines-in-ncr-and-in-taguig-city/>

The current requirements of the law for licensure examination may be too stringent and may have been a factor in the low number of guidance and counseling graduates applying for a license.

Moreover, the bill aims to increase the present salary grade of guidance counselors to make the salary more attractive and encourage more students to have a career in guidance counseling and attract more professionals.

In view of the foregoing, immediate approval of this bill is earnestly sought.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Keith Tan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Keith Micah "Atty. Mike" D.L. Tan
4th District, Quezon

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Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* - This Act shall be known as the "Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program for All School Children Act".

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - The State recognizes the vital role of children and youth in nation building and shall promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual and social well-being. Likewise, the State recognizes and guarantees the right of students to school guidance and counseling services for decisions and selecting the alternatives in fields of work suited to their potentialities.

Moreover, the State recognizes its duty to ensure that children and youth are not only intellectually but emotionally healthy and are able to contribute to the development of the country and attain a better quality of life.

For this purpose, the State shall provide a comprehensive guidance and counseling program that will adequately address the mental, emotional, behavioral, and developmental needs of school children in order to enhance their ability to learn and improve their discipline and behavior. In order to achieve this, the State shall:

(a) Strengthen guidance and counseling services in elementary and secondary schools by recruiting, hiring and training additional guidance counselors that will extend functional assistance to squarely address the mental, emotional, and developmental needs of students;

(b) Give adequate support and assistance to parents and guardians in

improving the behavior, academic performance, and career options of their children, including the provision of preventive and/or intervention measures to meet immediate problems and concerns of students, through access to appropriate, responsive, and holistic guidance and counseling services;

(c) Support school personnel and teachers in improving classroom management, conducting behavioral interventions to improve school discipline, and developing the awareness and skills to identify early warning signs of violence and suicide and the need for mental health services; and

(d) Provide direct and indirect guidance and counseling services, particularly for Homeroom Guidance, Career Guidance, Child Protection Policy, and other policies which are responsive to the K to 12 Basic Education Program.

SEC. 3. *Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program for All School Children.* – Notwithstanding the provisions of Republic Act No. 11036, otherwise known as the "Mental Health Act", the Department of Education (DepEd), in consultation with concerned government agencies and private organizations, shall institutionalize the Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program for all K to 12 students, hereinafter referred to as the Program.

The Program, which shall be comprehensive in scope, preventive and remedial in design, developmental in nature, and an integral component of the school's academic mission, shall be child-friendly and gender-sensitive. Such program shall be regularly updated and, at a minimum, shall include the following components:

(a) Provision of suitable, functional, proactive, and confidential guidance and counseling services to students and other stakeholders, which shall be standards-based and data driven;

(b) Enhancement of the appropriate school learning environment to improve students' academic development, career development, and personal-social development;

(c) Establishment of collaborative strategies for specifically identified populations in the school community;

(d) Identification of students' needs and problems;

(e) Conduct of the routine interviews and consultation with parents, teachers, school personnel and other stakeholders;

(f) Conduct of periodic psychological testing, learning and study orientation, research and enrichment activities;

- (g) Formulation of guidance policies;
- (h) Development of data-driven results and objectives;
- (i) Referrals to other support groups and services; and
- (j) Active engagement of family, community and other stakeholders

SEC. 4. *Recruitment, Hiring, and Training of Guidance Counselors.* - Subject to the guidelines set by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the Secretary of Education shall initiate the immediate recruitment, hiring, and training of school guidance counselors. The appropriate number of guidance counselors shall be assigned for each public elementary and secondary school to progressively meet the recommended ratio of one guidance counselor for every 500 students within five (5) years after the effectivity of this Act.

For this purpose, a master's degree in Guidance and Counseling as provided for under Section 13 (c) of Republic Act No. 9258, otherwise known as the "Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004", shall no longer be required for licensure examination.

SEC. 5. *Salary Grade Adjustment of Guidance Counselors.* - The salary schedule for the positions of Guidance Counselors shall be modified as follows:

POSITION TITLE	SALARY GRADE	MODIFIED SALARY GRADE
Guidance Counselor I	11	16
Guidance Counselor II	12	17
Guidance Counselor III	13	18

SEC. 6. *Scholarship and Return Service Program.* - The DepEd, in collaboration with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), shall develop a scholarship and return service program for those who are qualified to take the required bachelor's degree in Guidance and Counseling and shall render services in public elementary and high schools as guidance counselors.

SEC. 7. *Sanction for Noncompliance.* - The Secretary of the Education shall prescribe the appropriate administrative sanctions on school administrators who shall fail to comply with the provisions of this Act. In addition, erring private schools shall suffer the penalty of suspension of their permits to operate.

SEC. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DepEd, in coordination with the relevant agencies of government and private schools, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of this Act.

Furthermore, the Secretary of Education shall issue the necessary guidelines in the selection, recruitment and hiring of personnel and the nature, scope and guiding principles of the guidance and counseling services to be offered to students, including the rules of procedures, roles, functions and parameters in the organization, administration and supervision of a comprehensive guidance and counseling program.

SEC. 9. *Appropriations.* - The amount necessary to implement this Act shall be included in the General Appropriations Act of the year following its enactment into law and thereafter.

SEC. 10. *Separability Clause.* - Should any provision herein be declared unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity of the other provisions of this Act.

SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause.* - The pertinent provisions of Republic Act No. 9258, otherwise known as the "Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004" are hereby amended accordingly.

All laws, presidential decrees or issuances, executive orders, letter of instructions, administrative orders, rules and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby amended, repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 12. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,