

PPTA Survey of Guidance Counsellors, 2004

In March 2004, PPTA conducted a survey of guidance counsellors, both members and non-members, in order to gather some key information regarding issues such as qualifications and teacher education, professional association membership, extent of classroom teaching responsibilities, and views of PPTA services.

256 guidance counsellors responded to the survey, which was an excellent response rate. A copy of the questionnaire used is attached as an Appendix.

1. Job Titles

We were aware that some counsellors were being hired under different titles from the traditional 'Guidance Counsellor' title, but the number of these was in fact pretty small.

Table 1 – Job Titles

| Title contains words: | Number N=256 | % |
|--|-----------------|----|
| Guidance Counsellor | 180 | 70 |
| Guidance but not counsellor (e.g. HOD Guidance) | 22 | 9 |
| Counsellor but not guidance (e.g. School Counsellor) | 39 | 15 |
| Student support (e.g. HOD Student Support Services) | 5 | 2 |
| Other | 9 | 4 |
| Not answered | 1 | 0 |

Some of the more unusual titles were:

- Faculty Manager Student and Community Services
- Pastoral Care Assistant
- Student Advisor
- TIC Pastoral Care

2. Number of Counsellors

Respondents were asked to provide the number of guidance counsellors employed in their school as a Full Time Teacher Equivalent figure, and give either the name of the school or its March 1 2003 roll and school decile. From that information, calculations have been done of the average number of FTTEs used for guidance counselling by roll size and by decile, and also the range of guidance counselling FTTEs within those categories.

While the average FTTEs for guidance counselling increases with roll size, it does not increase proportionately. If the average FTTE in schools up to 300 is 0.72, one would expect that in schools in the range of seven times that size it would be about 5, but it is about half that. PPTA is not aware of any 'economies of scale' when it comes to the need for guidance counselling, yet these numbers would suggest a perception that there are.

The range of decisions that have been made in schools of similar roll numbers as to how much guidance counselling time is required is also quite startling, and reinforces the perceptions of guidance counsellors as expressed in response to Question 20 below that schools need advice as to what are reasonable caseloads for guidance counsellors. The fact that there is a school with 1070 students and only 0.2 FTTEs allocated to guidance counselling is shocking, as is the fact that there is a school with 2,447 students and only one guidance counsellor.

Table 2 – Guidance Counsellor FTTEs by Roll Size

| Roll Size | Average GC FTTE | Range GC FTTE |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 0 - 299 | 0.72 | 0.2 – 1.6 |
| 300 - 599 | 1.03 | 0.6 – 1.6 |
| 600 - 899 | 1.16 | 0.8 – 2.5 |
| 900 - 1199 | 1.23 | 0.2 – 2.4 |
| 1200 - 1499 | 1.68 | 1 – 2.2 |
| 1500 - 1799 | 1.87 | 1 – 2.3 |
| 1800 - 2099 | 2.0 | 1.5 – 2.6 |
| 2100 and above | 2.9 | 1 – 5.8 |

There is some increase in the number of guidance counsellors as the school decile increases. This may reflect the fact that lower decile schools tend to be smaller schools, however it is a concern that schools in deciles 1 to 4 especially are not able to spare more staffing for guidance counselling, considering the complex and varied demands which are likely to be placed upon counsellors in those schools.

Table 3 – Guidance Counsellor FTTEs by Decile

| School Decile | Average GC FTTE | Range GC FTTE |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1 | 1.11 | 1 - 2 |
| 2 | 1.26 | 0.7 – 2.5 |
| 3 | 1.14 | 0.4 – 2 |
| 4 | 1.24 | 0.6 – 4 |
| 5 | 1.46 | 1 – 2.4 |
| 6 | 1.33 | 0.2 – 2 |
| 7 | 1.22 | 0.2 – 2 |
| 8 | 1.30 | 0.3 – 2.2 |
| 9 | 1.36 | 0.4 - 2.3 |
| 10 | 1.6 | 0.6 – 5.8 |

3. Membership of the Professional Association

Respondents were asked whether they belonged to the NZ Association of Counsellors, which has a network especially for school guidance counsellors, or not, and reasons for not belonging. They were also asked whether their school required them to be a member, and whether it paid their membership. (If a school does require them to belong, then under 7.6.1 of the Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement they are obliged to reimburse the cost.)

Only 66% of the respondents belonged to NZAC. The 32% who did not belong gave a wide range of reasons:

Table 4 – Reasons for Not Belonging to NZAC

| Reason for not belonging to NZAC | No. N=81 | % |
|--|-------------|----|
| Applicant member (qualification not completed) | 4 | 5 |
| In the process of joining (as applicant or full member) | 23 | 28 |
| Not eligible (not a trained counsellor) | 13 | 16 |
| Covered by another professional body | 10 | 12 |
| Covered by PPTA – believes that is enough | 3 | 4 |
| Not joined - complexities of/problems with application process | 4 | 5 |
| Negative comment about NZAC | 3 | 4 |
| Cost (including school won't pay) | 10 | 12 |
| Other reasons | 10 | 12 |
| No reason given | 3 | 4 |

(Percentages total more than 100 because some respondents gave more than one reason)

Less than half (43%) of respondents were required by their schools to be members of NZAC. Of the 168 who did belong, 109 (65%) were required to belong. 165 respondents said that their school paid their NZAC membership, which is 98% of those who belonged, so clause 7.6.1 of the Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement is being applied in almost all cases.

4. Qualifications and Teacher Education

PPTA was keen to establish the registration status of counsellors, because there have been discussions with the Teachers Council about the LATT status and how it applies to guidance counsellors, in particular the Council's expectation that people with LATT status will do a course of teacher education if they are to continue in the position longterm. It is worrying that 14 people were either not registered or failed to answer this question. Guidance counselling is defined as a teaching role, and anyone hired for that role in a school must be registered with the Teachers Council, either as a teacher or with a Limited Authority to Teach.

Table 5 – Registration status of guidance counsellors

| Registration Status | No. N = 256 | % |
|------------------------------|----------------|----|
| Fully registered | 198 | 77 |
| Provisionally registered | 16 | 6 |
| Limited Authority to Teach | 28 | 11 |
| Not registered /not answered | 14 | 6 |

A wide range of counselling qualifications were listed. 8 respondents listed three separate counselling qualifications, and 37 listed two. The majority of respondents had done training designed specifically for teachers wanting to become guidance counsellors, i.e. a Postgraduate Diploma or a Masters in Counselling (or both). However, a significant number had done other counselling qualifications. It is pleasing to report that only a small number neither had counselling qualifications nor were engaged in completing a counselling qualification.

Table 6 – Counselling Qualifications

| Qualification | No. N=256 | % |
|---|--------------|----|
| Postgraduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling - Massey | 58 | 23 |
| Masters in Counselling - Massey | 33 | 13 |
| Postgraduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling - Waikato | 12 | 5 |
| Masters in Counselling - Waikato | 8 | 3 |
| Postgraduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling - Auckland | 9 | 4 |
| Masters in Counselling - Auckland | 17 | 7 |
| Postgraduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling - Canterbury | 8 | 3 |
| Masters in Counselling - Canterbury | 24 | 9 |
| Certificates in Counselling - various | 9 | 4 |
| Diplomas in Counselling - various | 21 | 8 |
| Masters in Counselling - various | 6 | 2 |
| Other | 68 | 27 |
| Currently completing a counselling qualification | 20 | 8 |
| No counselling qualification | 2 | 1 |
| Not answered | 7 | 3 |

(Percentages total more than 100 because some respondents listed more than one qualification)

5. Classroom Teaching Responsibilities

A concern expressed to PPTA frequently by guidance counsellors is around a gradual erosion of the time available for them to work as guidance counsellors, especially since the government ceased the 'tagging' of a set amount of staffing for guidance counselling. Many guidance counsellors have found themselves being required to do classroom teaching. This is a problem not only because it takes time away from the core job, but can also lead to role conflicts.

104 (41%) of the 256 respondents listed teaching responsibilities in addition to their guidance counsellor work. While most taught only one subject, 31 listed 2 subject responsibilities, and 8 listed 3 subject responsibilities. The mean number of teaching hours was 5.8, but it ranged from 16 to 1. The most commonly taught subjects were Health (including sexuality education), Lifeskills, Transition and Careers courses and English.

Table 7 – Subjects Taught

| Subject | No. N=104 | % |
|---|--------------|----|
| Health (including Sexuality Education) | 42 | 40 |
| Lifeskills/Transition/Careers Education | 38 | 37 |
| English | 13 | 13 |
| Maths | 4 | 4 |
| Sciences | 7 | 7 |
| Social Sciences | 8 | 8 |
| Arts | 3 | 3 |
| PE/Sport/Outdoor Education | 8 | 8 |
| Religious education | 5 | 5 |
| Other | 20 | 20 |

6. Employment Agreements

Guidance counsellors were asked what employment agreement they were on. The majority (78%) were on the Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement, and a few (4%) were on the Area Schools Collective Agreement. A small number (7%) were on individual agreements with the same terms and conditions as one of the collectives, and a very few were on individual agreements with different terms and conditions (3%). 17 people (7%) either did not know what agreement they were on or left this question blank.

Of the 25 respondents on individual employment agreements, 9 were simply fully registered teachers who were non-members of PPTA and were on individual employment agreements with the same terms and conditions. One other fully registered teacher, curiously, said s/he was a member, yet was on an individual agreement with other terms and conditions than the collective, and was doing 8 hours work a week at \$44 per hour. Clearly this member's situation needs fixing.

Of the remaining 15 respondents on individual agreements, there were 10 people with Limited Authority to Teach, 36% of all the LATTs in the sample. 7 of these 10 were on individual agreements with the same terms and conditions as the collective, but 3 were on other agreements, and it is possible that some of these are unaware that they can be members of PPTA and be on the Collective Agreement. There is some confusion in schools about this. A person hired to be a Guidance Counsellor is filling a teaching role, even though their role may not include any teaching. This is historical, because the guidance counsellor role was traditionally part of the staffing entitlement of the school.

The other 5 on individual employment agreements were not registered as teachers or as LATTs, and were being paid a variety of amounts, e.g. \$15 per hour, or a 'koha' of \$5,100 per annum. This is a concern.

7. PPTA Safe Schools Resources

Only 57% of the respondents remembered receiving the 'Affirming Diversity of Sexualities in the School Community' guidelines and kit which PPTA had sent to school guidance counsellors in early 2003.

Of those who did recall receiving the material, assessments of its usefulness were as follows:

Table 8 – Assessment of Usefulness of Affirming Diversity resources

| | No. N=145 | % |
|---|--------------|----|
| A useful/good resource | 85 | 59 |
| Read but not used as yet | 19 | 13 |
| Handed on to someone else without using it | 2 | 1 |
| Environment of school not open to this work | 7 | 5 |
| Haven't looked at/read it | 18 | 12 |
| Not really/no | 4 | 3 |
| Not answered | 10 | 7 |

The fact that 5% of guidance counsellors reported that their schools were not willing to tackle issues of sexual diversity, and that another 13% had either passed on the material or not looked at it, confirms PPTA's belief that there are still a number of schools which are likely to be unsafe places for gay and lesbian students.

On the other hand, typical answers from those who found it a useful resource affirmed the work of the Safe Schools Taskforce in preparing the material:

- A good resource to add to my file
- Good as confirmation of what the school is doing
- Excellent, the material is considered to be well researched and reflects thorough sensitivity around the issues
- Helpful as an overview
- It supports good practice, offers excellent ideas for working with staff/whole school
- It brought issues to my attention
- It has been a useful source of information for the school's pastoral team, which includes the Deans and myself
- The inclusiveness of the material was pleasing
- Useful checklist of what we do, plus we've established a group for GLB students in school mag/noticeboard etc, helped prompt info sheet to all staff
- We love the posters! We use them extensively. We're really passionate about affirming school diversity already, material good but it didn't add to our existing activities
- Awareness raising for staff, and helpful in writing school policy
- Good reference material
- I believe this school to be quietly affirming of its students including diversity of sexuality – I appreciate reading the document
- It gives backing to us when we try to defend the right of gays in our college

The website Safe Schools material had been accessed by only 9 (4%) of respondents, however. A number expressed hesitancy about using websites, but the question itself prompted quite a few to promise to check out the website, including one who said "I have always been under the impression that, although a member of PPTA, the emphasis was on teachers and teaching, therefore there would be little of use to me as a counsellor, but now I'm curious to find out more."

8. PPTA Support for Guidance Counsellors

203 (79%) of the respondents were PPTA members. They were asked whether they would subscribe to an electronic network of guidance counsellors run by PPTA. 159 (78% of the members) said they would subscribe, and only 10 (4%) said they would not. The rest were not sure.

197 respondents (more than had said they would subscribe to such a network) suggested uses for an electronic network of guidance counsellors run by PPTA. Many of them suggested multiple uses for such a network, so the percentages below add to over 100.

Table 9 – Uses for Electronic Network

| | No. N=197 | % |
|---|----------------------|----------|
| Providing information/sharing resources | 91 | 46 |
| Discussions/chat/networking/contact with other GCs | 88 | 45 |
| Support (including frequent comments on isolation of GCs) | 74 | 38 |
| Keeping up to date/sharing good practice | 19 | 10 |
| Communication of concerns to PPTA | 4 | 2 |
| Don't know/not answered | 11 | 6 |

Respondents were also asked if there were any specific services which PPTA could be providing to guidance counsellors that it is not already. Counsellors used this question to tell PPTA about a wide range of issues. These included:

Table 10 – Other Services PPTA Could Provide

| | No. N=145 | % |
|---|----------------------|----------|
| Advocacy to BOTs/Principals/Teachers/government about need for counsellors in schools | 73 | 50 |
| Teacher registration/qualifications/salary issues | 15 | 10 |
| Meet Guidance Counsellor support needs | 8 | 6 |
| Provide advice/information on Guidance Counsellor role | 8 | 6 |
| Supervision issues | 7 | 5 |
| Provide advice on job descriptions/appraisal processes | 6 | 4 |
| Consult with/inform Guidance Counsellors more/specialised advisory officer | 4 | |
| Get schools to support and pay for professional association membership | 3 | 2 |
| Assist networking by email or contact list | 3 | 2 |
| Provide mediation/support in conflict situations | 3 | 2 |
| Address workplace bullying | 2 | 1 |
| Provide sponsorship for Guidance Counsellor networks/workshops/conferences | 2 | 1 |
| Provide a counsellors association as an alternative to NZAC | 2 | 1 |
| Other | 11 | 8 |

By far the most commonly mentioned concern was the need for PPTA to advocate to Boards of Trustees, Principals, teachers and government about the need for counsellors in schools, and some of these comments conveyed a picture of guidance counsellors under huge pressure in their schools. Some typical comments were:

- Advocate for school counsellors being available for their role as school counsellor, not for other tasks they frequently get landed with.
- Advocate for more counselling hours, provide resources for principals re the value of counselling.
- Advocate for counselling in schools as it is being undermined by principals now that they can decide on how time is used.
- Counselling is a special or unique part of the school services however my experience is counsellors are under-valued, seen as able to teach classes. Yet teaching and counselling require different approaches. Students find it hard to understand that the teacher who must uphold the school rules, detentions, insistence on correct uniform and behaviour can also be the person who can be empathetic in the counselling situation. Since the MRG we have lost the full-time counselling status and units we were entitled to receive. As a consequence counsellors are seen by management as part of the teaching/management staff. This is where the conflict is.
- Educating principals, DPs, senior management, of school counselling role and where our role must not come into conflict with students/clients comfortably accessing us.
- Getting guidance hours tagged by size of school.
- Promoting our role, lobbying MOE, GSE etc to consult us re changes that affect us, supporting us given our relative isolation from our teaching colleagues.

- There need to be Ministry guidelines available to principals on how counsellors work and the legal requirements they are under. There is still a lot of misunderstanding about counsellors' roles in schools and a lack of acceptance of such issues as confidentiality, advocacy for young people, counselling being a valid use of educational time. Because this role is not clear in my school, I experience regular harassment and rudeness from teachers and senior management when I approach or ask for students out of class. There is a problem delineating the counsellor's role from that of the form teacher. As a result it has affected my ability to do my job and I am currently seeking employment elsewhere as I hate being in an environment which has conflict with colleagues. As a past teacher I'm stunned at the lack of Ministry support, help, assistance for the role of Guidance Counsellor.

Conclusions

This has been a useful survey of a group of teachers who often feel isolated from their colleagues and feel that their particular situation is not fully understood by their school, their colleagues or their union. The information provides an excellent basis for further development of Association policy in regard to guidance counsellors.

Appendix

5 February 2004



Dear Guidance Counsellor

Re: **Survey of Guidance Counsellors**

As the Advisory Officer at PPTA National Office with responsibility for guidance counsellor issues, I was delighted to be able to attend the Guidance Counsellors Conference held in Nelson in September 2003. I participated in a panel discussion there about issues for guidance counsellors, and also presented a workshop on PPTA's materials to assist schools to be safe places for students of every sexuality.

As a result of discussions with a range of guidance counsellors at that conference, and our regular meetings with school guidance counsellor members of the NZAC Executive, this questionnaire has been developed to gather information that will assist PPTA to better deliver services to guidance counsellors. Because we are trying to develop a picture of the situation for all guidance counsellors, we would like you to complete the questionnaire whether or not at this point you are a member of PPTA.

You are assured of confidentiality; the only information made public from the survey will be in summary form. If we quote any responses individually, we will ensure that nothing which might identify the respondent is in the quote. The background information sought is for statistical analysis purposes only.

We are supplying two copies of the survey (with Freepost envelopes) to every secondary school and one to every area school. If there are more than this number of guidance counsellors in your school, we ask you please to photocopy for them this letter and the questionnaire so all of you can respond. **Please post your completed questionnaire back to PPTA, P.O. Box 2119, Wellington, by Friday 5 March 2004, or you can fax it back to National Office, on 04-382-8763.**

We look forward to receiving your completed survey form, and being able to provide an improved service to guidance counsellors in future as a result of the information generated.

Yours sincerely

Judie Alison
Advisory Officer
jalison@ppta.org.nz
DDI: 04-913-4248

Guidance Counsellor Survey

Please post your completed questionnaire in the envelope supplied back to PPTA, P.O. Box 2119, Wellington, by Friday 5 March 2004, or you can fax it back to National Office, on 04-382-8763. Thank you for your help in completing this survey.

Background Information:

1. What is your position title? _____
2. How many guidance counsellors are employed in your school? (Please give number in Full Time Teacher Equivalents, e.g. 2.5FTTE.): _____
3. Name of school (or March 1 2003 roll and school decile):

NZ Association of Counsellors:

4. Are you a member of NZ Association of Counsellors? **Yes/No** (Circle one)
5. **If No in 4:** What are your reasons for not belonging?

6. Does your school require you to be a member of NZAC? **Yes/No** (Circle one)
7. Does your school pay your membership of NZAC? **Yes/No** (Circle one)

Qualifications and Teacher Education:

8. What is your teacher registration status?

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| | ✓ |
| Fully Registered | |
| Provisionally Registered | |
| Limited Authority to Teach (LATT) | |

9. What is your counselling qualification? (Give title of qualification and institution which granted it.)

Qualification

Institution

10. Do you have any classroom teaching responsibilities in 2004? Please show in table below:

| Subject Taught | Hrs per Week |
|---------------------|--------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| Total Hours: | |

Employment:

11. What Agreement are you employed on?

| | |
|---|---|
| Agreement | ✓ |
| Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement | |
| Area Schools Teachers' Collective Agreement | |
| Individual Agreement with same terms & conditions as collective | |
| Individual Agreement - Other | |
| Don't Know | |

12. If 'Individual Agreement – Other' in 11: Please give details of your **before tax** pay rate. (Please show this either as an annual gross salary, or if you are paid by the hour, the gross hourly rate and number of paid hours per week.)

PPTA Safe Schools Resources:

13. At the beginning of 2003, PPTA sent all guidance counsellors a copy of our 'Affirming Diversity of Sexualities in the School Community' Guidelines and Kit. Did you receive this material? **Yes/No** (Circle one)

14. If **Yes** in 13: Have you found this material useful? Please comment:

15. The PPTA website www.ppta.org.nz contains material on these issues under the heading 'Safe Schools'. Have you used this material? **Yes/No** (Circle one)

16. If **Yes** in 15: Have you found the website material useful? Please comment:

PPTA Support:

17. Are you a member of PPTA? **Yes/No** (Circle one)

18. PPTA is planning to establish electronic networks of particular groups of members, and it is proposed that guidance counsellors would be such a network. Would you subscribe? **Yes/No/Don't Know** (Circle one)

19. What would you see as the best use(s) of such an electronic network for guidance counsellors?

20. What specific service(s) could PPTA be providing to guidance counsellors that it is not already? Please comment:

Additional comments:

21. Please feel free to expand here on any of your answers, or raise anything else which you believe PPTA needs to know about in relation to guidance counsellors.