SENATE BILL NO. 2571

AN ACT TO PROVIDE CERTAIN CONDITIONS ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELORS BY SCHOOL DISTRICTS, AND TO PRESCRIBE THE COMPREHENSIVE COUNSELING SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED BY SUCH COUNSELORS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. (1) The assignment of guidance counselors to the particular schools within the school district shall be at the discretion of the local school board with the following restrictions:

(a) The counselor/student ratio shall be no greater than 1/300 to implement a standards-based, comprehensive school counseling program.

(b) No individual shall be employed as a school guidance counselor without appropriate training and certification as determined by the State Department of Education.

(c) School guidance counselors shall be full-time professional personnel, shall spend at least seventy-five percent (75%) of work time in direct counseling contact with students, and shall devote no more than twenty-five percent (25%) of the work day to administrative activities relating to counseling services.

(d) School guidance counselors shall provide the following comprehensive counseling services:

(i) Individual student academic program planning;

(ii) Interpreting cognitive, aptitude and achievement tests;

(iii) Counseling students who are tardy or absent;

(iv) Collaborating with teachers to present guidance curriculum lessons;
(v) Counseling students who have disciplinary problems;
(vi) Counseling students as to appropriate school dress;
(vii) Analyzing grade-point averages in relationship to achievement;
(viii) Interpreting student records;
(ix) Providing teachers with suggestions for better management of study halls;
(x) Ensuring that student records are maintained as per state and federal regulations;
(xi) Assisting the school principal with identifying and resolving student issues, needs and problems;
(xii) Career and educational planning and placement;
(xiii) Preventive classroom counseling activities and crisis intervention; and
(xiv) Written communication to parents or guardians of students following student counseling.

(e) School guidance counselors shall not be required to provide the following services:
(i) Registration and scheduling of new students;
(ii) Administering cognitive, aptitude and achievement tests;
(iii) Responsibility for signing excuses for students who are tardy or absent;
(iv) Teaching classes when teachers are absent;
(v) Performing disciplinary actions;
(vi) Sending students home who are not appropriately dressed;
(vii) Computing grade-point averages for students;
(viii) Maintaining student records and other clerical record keeping;
(ix) Supervising study halls; and
(x) Assisting with duties in the principal's office.

(2) The State Department of Education may adopt regulations regarding the activities of the school guidance counselor as are not inconsistent with this section.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2002.