"NEW SECTION.  Sec. 1. (1) The legislature recognizes that certificated school counselors are uniquely qualified to address the developmental needs of all students through a comprehensive school counseling program. School counselors play a critical role in maximizing K-12 student outcomes, including those related to attendance, academic achievement, high school graduation, postsecondary readiness, and social-emotional development. The legislature finds that school counselors play an especially unique role in the lives of students from underserved backgrounds, particularly students of color, students with disabilities, English language learners, and students living in poverty, who, according to research, are more likely to seek out their school counselor for academic, mental health, or postsecondary planning needs.

(2) The legislature also recognizes research indicating that lower counselor to student ratios enable counselors to work more closely with students and address their unique needs, and that school counselors should be able to use their time to provide direct and indirect services to students as described in a comprehensive school counseling program grounded in research.

NEW SECTION.  Sec. 2. A new section is added to chapter 28A.320 RCW to read as follows:

By the beginning of the 2022-23 school year each school district shall develop and implement a written plan for a comprehensive school counseling program that is based on regularly updated standards developed by a national organization representing school counselors. The written plan must:

(1) Establish a comprehensive school counseling program that uses state and nationally recognized counselor frameworks and is systemically aligned to state learning standards;
(2) Provide a process for identifying student needs through a multilevel school data review and analysis that includes, at a minimum, use-of-time data, program results data, and data regarding communication with administrators, parents, students, and stakeholders;

(3) Explain how direct and indirect services will be delivered through the comprehensive school counseling program; and

(4) Establish an annual review and assessment process for the comprehensive school counseling program that includes building administrators and stakeholders.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 3. A new section is added to chapter 28A.320 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The comprehensive school counseling program required by section 2 of this act must be implemented by school counselors or other educational staff associates for the purpose of guiding students in academic pursuits, career planning, and social-emotional learning.

(2) School counselors or other educational staff associates assigned to implement comprehensive school counseling programs must allocate at least 80 percent of their work time providing direct and indirect services to benefit students, as aligned with standards developed by a national organization representing school counselors. Tasks such as coordinating and monitoring student testing, supervising students at lunch and recess, and assuming the duties of other noncounseling staff are not direct or indirect services.

(3) For purposes of this section:

(a) "Direct services" are in-person interactions between school counselors or other educational staff associates assigned to implement comprehensive school counseling programs and students that help students improve achievement, attendance, and discipline. Examples include, but are not limited to, instruction, appraisal, advisement, and counseling.

(b) "Indirect services" are provided on behalf of students as a result of interactions with others by school counselors or educational staff associates assigned to implement comprehensive school counseling programs that allow school counselors or educational staff associates to enhance student achievement and promote equity and access for all students. Examples include, but are not limited to, collaboration, consultation, and referrals.
(c) "Work time" means the portion of an employee's contracted hours for which they are contracted to perform the duties of a school counselor or other educational staff associate assignment.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. A new section is added to chapter 28A.320 RCW to read as follows:

(1) By December 1, 2021, the office of the superintendent of public instruction must develop and distribute to school districts guidance for the implementation of sections 2 and 3 of this act.

(2) Prior to the 2022-23 school year, each school district board of directors must, within existing funds, adopt a transition plan for developing and implementing a comprehensive school counseling program plan.

(3) This section expires June 30, 2023."

Correct the title.

EFFECT: (1) Allows comprehensive school counseling programs (counseling programs) to be implemented by school counselors or other Educational Staff Associates (ESAs).

(2) Specifies that school counselors or other ESAs assigned to implement counseling programs must allocate 80 percent of their work time to providing direct and indirect services to students, as aligned with specified standards, instead of having the 80 percent work time requirement qualified by "when implementing the plan."

(3) Modifies the definitions of "direct services," "indirect services," and "work time" to include references to ESAs who may be assigned to implement counseling programs.

(4) Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to develop and distribute guidance, rather than policy guidance, regarding the implementation of the proposed counseling program plan and counseling program, and removes a requirement directing the OSPI to collaborate with a nonprofit organization representing school directors in developing the guidance.

(5) Requires school district boards of directors to "adopt" instead of "develop" a transition plan for developing and implementing a comprehensive school counseling program plan.

(6) Makes a technical change by changing a reference from "social and emotional learning" to "social-emotional learning."

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