

TRUMAN GROUP

Overview

Over the course of the last five years, Truman Group has provided Consultation Groups (CGs) to 280+ Counseling staff members and Heads of School in the international school community. Historically these services were requested by and funded through regional organizations. In 2022 the Office of Overseas Schools (OOS) determined that the effort was a priority for the office. Based on budget cuts being made by regional associations, and with the support of OSAC, funded the 2022-2023 programming directly.

In the 2022-23 school year, Truman Group was contracted to provide up to 48 CGs for Counselors and Heads of School. In the late summer, OOS assigned an allotment of groups to each regional association, and the associations were sent instructions regarding their role in recruitment and logistical support. Groups were assembled and began in October, 2022.

The following table reports the number of groups and participants by region as of December 31st, 2022.

Regional Assn	Counselor CGs (participants)	HoS CGs (participants)
AISA	5 (30)	4 (24)
CEESA	7 (42)	0 (0)
NESA	4 (24)	.5 (3)*
Tri Assn	5 (30)	0 (0)
EARCOS	9 (45)	.5 (3)*
AMISA	4 (24)	2 (12)
Total	34 (195)	7 (42)

*Shared group, participants from NESA & EARCOS

Two associations were not able to complete the recruitment and group assignments in time to start groups in the fall. These tasks have recently been completed and groups are scheduled to start in January/early February of 2023.

Regional Assn	Counselor CG (participants)	HoS CG (participants)
ECIS	3 (18)	0 (0)
MAIS	2 (12)	2 (12)
Total	5 (30)	2 (12)

We expect that with the new ECIS and MAIS groups starting this winter, the total number of groups in progress for 2023 will total 48 groups across all regions.

Counselor CGs

School counselors report an unusually large number of students presenting with disrupted social and emotional function, and post COVID, the level of disruption is more profound than counselors have encountered previously. Large numbers of students are struggling with anxiety and depression, and many students are less socially mature than staff expect they should be. This vulnerability has led to increased demands on staff, and counselors are using consultation to increase their effectiveness as they provide support and intervention for students who are anxious, emotionally disrupted, and poorly able to manage in school. Significant time in Consult Groups has been dedicated to school-based management of anxiety and depression, as well as supporting highly stressed families with vulnerable parents. Counselors have also talked about the stress they experience related to caring for colleagues and members of the school community, separate from students. CGs leaders have worked to help counselors know when and how to limit their involvement, as counselors have limited resources and need to be intentional about how to apply intervention. Additionally, significant discussion has focused on making appropriate referrals to outside clinical resources.

Counselor develop clinical skills, including:

- School based intervention for anxiety and depression
- Defining accurate models and intervention for trauma
- Identification and management of high-risk students
- Management of self-harm and self-destructive behavior
- Intervening with vulnerable parents
- Ensuring collaborative and effective communication with administrators
- Identification and collaboration with external clinical resources
- Maintaining records and managing clinical information
- Reporting child safety concerns

Head of School CGs

Heads of school continue to report high personal and professional demands in their role. Multiple Heads report that they have had little break over the last two years, and that their responsibilities leave them socially isolated with few supports. Many describe faculties that are difficult to manage, senior administrators who are burnt out, and parents and boards of directors who are excessively demanding. CGs have provided a forum for communicating approaches to solving difficult personnel and operational challenges, as well as providing a sense of community and emotional support for heads.