



New York State Association of School Nurses

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"Caring for New York's Future"

POSITION STATEMENT

THE ROLE OF LPN'S IN THE SCHOOL SETTING

HISTORY

In March 1995, the New York State Education Department disseminated a memorandum entitled "The Provision of Nursing Tasks and Health-Related Activities in the School Setting for Students with Special Health Care Needs". This memorandum also provided guidance and clarification on implementing existing laws and regulations concerning the provision of health services to all children in schools. (Duncan-Poitier). Health professionals, education personnel, school boards, and school health committees have collaborated to provide health services for many years.

DEFINITIONS

Section 6902 of Article 139 of the Education Law distinguishes between the legal definitions of Registered Professional Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses as follows:

- The practice of the profession of nursing as a registered professional nurse is defined as diagnosing and treating human responses to actual or potential health problems through such services as case finding, health teaching, health counseling, and provision of care supportive to or restorative of life and well being, and executing medical regimens prescribed by a licensed physician, dentist, or other licensed health care provider legally authorized under this title and in accordance with the commissioner's regulations.
- The practice of the profession of nursing as a licensed practical nurse is defined as performing tasks and responsibilities within the framework of case finding, health teaching, health counseling, and provision of supportive and restorative care under the direction of a Registered Professional Nurse, licensed physician, dentist, or other licensed health care provider legally authorized under this title and in accordance with the commissioner's regulations.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

The incidence of chronic illnesses (e.g., asthma, diabetes, attention deficit disorder, mental health illness) in school-age children is increasing. In addition, complex medical problems that were at one time only managed at inpatient settings are now being managed in the school setting. Federal mandates and parental expectations require that schools are able to manage these illnesses. This, in turn, raises the demands for qualified personnel to ensure the health and safety of students with special health needs as well as all students.

New York State Education Law requires that all school districts employing school nurses must hire Registered Professional Nurses. However, NYSASN believes there is an appropriate role for a Licensed Practical Nurse in the school setting if he/she is employed as a second nurse in a building and/or as an assistant to the Registered Professional Nurse.

Some of the tasks that may be performed by a Licensed Practical Nurse under the direction of the Registered Professional Nurse include:

- Assisting the Registered Professional Nurse by supplying objective data for the Registered Professional Nurse in making decisions regarding the nursing care of specific students
- Performing initial vision or hearing screenings
- Documenting physical exams and screenings on cumulative health records
- Working in the classroom with one or more students with special health care needs
- Administering medications

Some of the tasks Licensed Practical Nurses are prohibited from performing include:

- Working independently of a Registered Professional Nurse as a substitute nurse
- Performing Assessments
- Interpreting clinical data or acting independently on such data
- Creating, initiating, or altering nursing care goals or establishing nursing care plans
- Triage

It is critical that the Registered Professional Nurse be involved in district policy development that addresses the issue of using Licensed Practical Nurses in the school setting.

CONCLUSION

It is the position of NYSASN that the role of Licensed Practical Nurses in the school setting must reflect their scope of practice. NYSASN agrees there is a place for Licensed Practical Nurses in school. However, due to the laws and regulations defining their scope of practice, a Licensed Practical Nurse can not take on the role of the School Nurse or practice independently of the School Nurse.

Based upon NY State laws and regulations, NYSASN supports the fact that School Nurses must be responsible for all decision making regarding the nursing care provided in the school setting and which activities may be assigned to the Licensed Practical Nurse. The School Nurse must be available to provide direction in all situations requiring Registered Professional Nursing assessment and intervention.

REFERENCES

Duncan-Poitier, J. (NYSED). "Frequently Asked Questions About Roles and Responsibilities in Relation to Nursing Procedures and Health-Related Activities for All Children in the School Setting. Retrieved March 19, 2009, from

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