



New York State Association of School Nurses

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"Caring for New York's Future"

POSITION STATEMENT

DUTIES OF THE SCHOOL NURSE

BACKGROUND

School represents the second most influential environment in a child's life, followed by the child's home. As more students enter schools with health or mental health problems, school nurses are challenged to manage their care throughout the day. "There is a recognized relationship between health and learning, as there is between school nurse availability and student well-being and educational success. Duties of the school nurse encompass both health and educational goals". (American Academy of Pediatrics 2008).

DISCUSSION

The duties of the school nurse MAY include but are not limited to the following:

The school nurse provides direct health care to students and staff:

- Provides nursing care to students and staff who have been injured or who present with acute illnesses.
- Uses the nursing process to assess, plan, implement, and evaluate care for students with chronic health conditions.
- Develops nursing care plans/emergency actions plans for students when needed.
- Administers medication and performs health care procedures within the scope of nursing practice and prescribed by an appropriately licensed health care provider.

The school nurse provides leadership for the provision of health services:

- As the health care expert in school, the school nurse assesses the overall system of care and develops a plan for assuring all health needs are met.
- With the collaboration of other staff members, the school nurse develops a plan for responding to emergencies and disasters in the school setting as well as training staff to respond appropriately.
- Assesses the need for delegation of care to other staff members while considering applicable laws, training, supervision, and evaluation by the school nurse.

The school nurse provides screening and referral for health conditions:

- In order to address potential health problems that can be barriers to learning or symptoms of underlying medical conditions, the school nurse conducts certain screenings. These may include, but are not limited to distance acuity, near vision, plus lens, color perception, hearing, and scoliosis.
- The school nurse interprets screening results and makes referrals to parents and/or community agencies when appropriate.

The school nurse promotes a healthy school environment:

- The school nurse is a main contributor in providing for the physical and emotional safety of the school community.
- Immunization records are closely examined prior to school entry with deficiencies noted to parents. Local law must be considered when considering immunization issues with regards to admission and/or possible exclusion of a student.
- School nurses monitor all cases or potential cases of communicable disease, report cases where appropriate, and exclude/re-admit students based on district/local policy.
- The school nurse, along with other staff members, routinely assesses the physical environment of the school and suggests actions to improve health and safety. Items that may be assessed include the playground, indoor air quality, and patterns of illness or injury.

The school nurse promotes health:

- Health information is provided directly to individual students, groups of students, or classes as necessary in order to provide additional guidance or clarification of the health curriculum.
- Collaboration with physical education teachers and food service personnel serves to promote healthy lifestyles for students and staff members.
- Provides health education for the improvement of health by teaching students and staff to become more assertive health consumers and to assume greater responsibility for their own health.

The school nurse serves in a leadership role for health policies and programs:

- School nurses must be included in and take a leadership role in the development, execution, and evaluation of school district health policies.
- School nurses are encouraged to pursue topics to research as part of their own continuing education and commitment to best practice.
- Provides leadership and/or support for staff wellness programs.

The school nurse serves as a liaison between school personnel, family, community, and health care providers:

- School nurses are an integral part of the special education team when formulating an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) or 504 plan for a medical issue concerning a student.

- School nurses interact with students' family via written or telephone communication in order to maintain a dialogue regarding health issues and make referrals to community health agencies when indicated.

CONCLUSION

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) cites eight components of a Coordinated School Health Program. They include:

- Physical Education
- Health Services
- Nutrition Services
- Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services
- Healthy School Environment
- Health Promotion for Staff
- Family/Community Involvement
- Health Education

School Nurses are well positioned within the school setting to play a crucial role in the seamless provision of comprehensive health services to children and youth.

REFERENCES

American Academy of Pediatrics, Role of the School Nurse in Providing School Health Services. *Pediatrics*. 2008; 121 5: 1052-1056.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, School Health Index: A Self-Assessment and Planning Guide. 2005

National Association of School Nurses. *Issue Brief: Role of the School Nurse*. National Association of School Nurses; 2002. Available at: www.nasn.org. Accessed September 17, 2008

Derived from NASN Issue Brief "Role of the School Nurse" as referenced above as well as previous NYSASN Position Statement "The School Nurse".

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