



New York State Association of School Nurses

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"Caring for New York's Future"

POSITION STATEMENT

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL NURSE IN SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS

HISTORY

The concept of School Based health Centers (SBHC) began in the early 1970's in Dallas, Texas and St. Paul, Minnesota. School Based Health Centers are now found in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools throughout the country. As of 2005, there are approximately 1700 SBHC across the nation. (Gustafson).

Though once controversial, centers are now viewed as meeting the needs of a population of students that might otherwise go without healthcare, as many children suffer from unrecognized health problems due to lack of access to healthcare. School Based Health Centers can provide care that is more easily accessible because they deliver services in a convenient fashion, in a familiar environment, where students attend each school day. (Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati).

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

School nurses know that students must be healthy to fully participate in their educational experience. Unfortunately, there are many students in New York State without adequate access to primary health care. If a student does have health insurance, it may be difficult for them to travel to the practitioner due to a lack of transportation or the parent's inability to secure time away from employment. School Based Health Centers have proven to be the answer to some of these issues without duplicating or replacing school nursing services.

The National Assembly on School Based Health Care (NASBHC) states, "School nurses and School Based Health Center staff share an important mission: protecting and advancing the health and well-being of our nation's school-aged children." (Jackson). The success of the partnership between the school nurse and SBHC requires:

- Well-defined roles and responsibilities
- Respect and support for each partner's contributions
- Joint policies and procedures ensuring confidentiality and quality care
- Information sharing in compliance with state and federal law

RATIONALE

School Based Health Centers are successful because they fill a need. As of September 18, 2009, there are 214 approved, operating SBHCs in New York State. One hundred thirty (130) are located in New York City and 84 are located in the rest of the state. (NYSDOH). They are

located in convenient, non-traditional settings where students are present on a daily basis. School Based Health Centers provide many advantages including:

1. Providing care in a timely fashion
2. Helping children stay in school and thus improve academic outcomes
3. Increasing the use of well child services
4. Improving immunization rates
5. Reducing the use of emergency rooms for minor illnesses

National statistics concerning school-based health centers demonstrate that 97% of student visits to the SBHC are for well child care and immunizations. (Foy, Hahn) 2009. NYSASN conducted a survey monkey in December 2009 to gather opinions from school nurses regarding SBHC. Of the 141 nurses responding, only 18 (12.8%) reported having a SBHC in their district. Of this small number of nurses there was no significant report of duplication of services and the nurses did not feel their jobs were threatened by the presence of a SBHC in the school setting.

Both the school nurse and the SBHC have distinct roles and each contributes to students' health, academic outcomes, life-long achievement, and over-all student and staff well-being. One does not replace the need for the other. In support of successful school nurse-school-based health center partnerships, a shared vision of collaboration must be in place. (NASN) 2001. Lack of cooperation between the school nurse and the SBHC can result in fragmented care, duplication of services, gaps in delivery of services, and poor use of existing resources and services. The challenge is to define and delineate the roles and responsibilities of school nurses and members of the SBHC staff in order to provide seamless and comprehensive care for students in an evidence-based system of care. SBHCs should never be used as a replacement for a Registered Professional School Nurse.

CONCLUSION

It is the position of the New York State Association of School Nurses (NYSASN) that school nurses should embrace collaborations with SBHC. They provide a comprehensive range of services that specifically meet the needs of all children. The multiple models of SBHC allow for creativity in serving the specific needs of the community based population. The School Based Health Care setting provides a unique opportunity to implement a multidisciplinary team approach utilizing integrated services to manage issues affecting a child's health, school performance, and school attendance. (Scudder et al., 2007)

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