

## AN OVERVIEW: MINNESOTA

## SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES and SCHOOL NURSING PRACTICE

# School Health Services - The School Program

School health services is a comprehensive approach to preventing and addressing student health problems that interfere with learning. School health services is managed by licensed school nurses with advice and support the other student support services team members, administrators, teachers, parents and community partners.

School health services involves planning and implementing strategies and safeguards to protect, promote and manage the health and safety of the school population (students at all age/grade levels, staff, students volunteers and visitors) as well as preventing illness and injury throughout the school year.

#### **School health services** includes these elements:

- **Policy, procedures and accountability** including communication and documentation.
- ➤ Planning within the school community for the promotion and protection of student and staff; partnering with school teams such as administration, student support services, health and physical education, wellness (addressing nutrition, school food services and activity/exercise), staff wellness, health environment or health and safety, early childhood, special education and transitions, school climate or social-emotional learning, all hazards/crisis response and parent involvement.
- ➤ Planning and networking with community partners including health and mental health clinics and providers, public health, emergency management, social services and housing agencies, volunteer organizations and advocates, youth development advocates, religious-spiritual leaders and employers of parents of students.
- **Coordinating with administrators and student instructional support services** to provide system-wide and school-wide approaches to promote health, a positive school climate and reduce barriers to learning.
- **★ Staffing** professional licensed school nurses, assistants; trained educators in key school areas/programs.
- ✗ Identification of individual student needs: School nurses assess, plan, intervene (via direct nursing cares and procedures, health teaching, counseling and advocacy) and evaluate care. School nurses train and supervise specific staff to meet the daily and emergency needs of students with unique health, mental health, family and social conditions.
- ✗ In-service education of the school staff in wellness, health promotion and prevention, identification of early warning signs of health and mental health problems, specialized services, and emergency response.

- **All Hazards planning** including emergency, crisis and disaster preparedness and response.
- **Equipment and supplies** for protection, prevention, intervention and emergency response.
- **X** Financing school health services via the general fund, categorical aid programs (ex., early childhood screening, Title I services such as for children and youth who are homeless), public health/human services partnerships, federal medical services funds for student receiving services according to their Individualized Education Program, and from public and private grants and programs.

Licensed school nurses, seen as the medical expert in the school system, are often sought out by staff for advice on adult and family health issues. Depending on the school district plan and school nurse position description, advice and counsel of regarding staff concerns may or may not be an assigned duty role. The role of licensed school nurses in employee or occupational health should be clarified by the school district human services office and communicated to administrators and school staff.

# **State Education Requirements**

Minnesota Statute, section 121A.21 (School Health Services) states "every school board must provide services to promote the health of its pupils." The school health services plan including staffing of professional nursing staff and assistive personnel is based on the unique needs of the school population and the resources in the community.

The statute specifies that school districts and charter schools with 1000 enrollees or more must employ one full-time-equivalent licensed school nurse as defined by Minnesota Rule 8710.6100. School districts must determine the health, emergency and special education needs of and obligations to serve the student population to prior to selecting the health services model that best meet these needs.

Districts with under 1000 students should also use a needs assessment process to determine the level of services to be provided, holding same licensure standard for nursing personnel. Smaller districts, in order to employ full time licensed staff, have licensed school nurses a second assigned a second complementary role or program such as Safe and Drug Free Schools, Vocational Education in health occupations (if so licensed), and Health and Safety Coordinator (environmental health, violence prevention and emergency management) or Employee / Occupational Health. Very small rural districts use a consulting licensed school nurse employed by an education district, special education cooperative or county public health agency. As a consultant, the work focuses on establishing the system of safe and appropriate care with clear policies and protocols including the All Hazards crisis response plan. The consulting school nurse monitors the systems and plans throughout the school year. The consulting school nurse also evaluates students with newly diagnosed health conditions and conducts student health assessments for 504 or special education planning. If the latter is not provided by the consulting nursing, a licensed school nurse or public health nurse needs to be independently contracted for the 504 and special education assessments and planning.

The national professional organization of school nurses (National Association of School Nurses) calls for one full time professional school nurse per 750 students, a lesser ratio if any students have complex health needs. It is not feasible to meet the obligation of the School Health Services statute if a public school employs no professional staff, or if a school district requires a licensed school nurse to serve more than 3000 students in several schools – even if assistive health personnel are also employed. In either case, at a minimum, special education students' right to health assessment in determining special education needs is compromised. The safety of student with potential emergency conditions and the optimal learning of newly-diagnosed students with chronic health conditions can also be called into question.

Minnesota Statute, section 121.21(c.) allows a district with 1000 students or more to apply for an alternative health arrangement. Smaller school districts may find the parameters useful in designing a school heath services program. An application form (ED-02391-02E) is available from the MDE Safe and Healthy Learners; contact Ruth Ellen Luehr: (<a href="mailto:ruthellen.luehr@state.mn.us">ruthellen.luehr@state.mn.us</a>; telephone 651-582-8403)

# School Nursing Practice – Professionals Designing and Implementing School Health Services

Professional School Nurses are the planners and primary providers of school health services. They are a part of the school's multi-disciplinary team to attend to the inextricable link between health and learning.

Working with parents, other health professionals and other educators, school nurses identify student health-related concerns, determine interventions and accommodations described in student individualized health care plans (IHP), and provide services and evaluate outcomes that support students' optimum health for academic success.

# **School nursing** is a specialized practice

of professional nursing that advances the well-being, academic success and lifelong achievement and health of students. To that end, school nurses

- facilitate positive student responses to normal development;
- promote health and safety including a healthy environment;
- intervene with actual and potential health problems;
- provide case management services; and
- actively collaborate with others to build student and family capacity for adaptation, self-management, self advocacy, and learning.

National Association of School Nurses, 2011

In Minnesota, professional school nurses are Registered Nurses licensed by the Minnesota Board of Nursing who carry a dual license as a School Nurse from the Minnesota Board of Teaching.

Many students are at risk for failing in school because a chronic or episodic illness interferes with their attending school. School nurses work to improve attendance and reduce interruptions to student learning that can occur daily or sporadically. School nurses determine plans and treatments specific to students' health, development and capabilities can include medication administration, nutrition, rest, communication and mental health interventions. More and more, the care involves medical supports such as direct service to students who have tracheotomies, ventilators, catheters, colostomies, limb braces, wheel chairs, respiratory care including oxygen, tube feedings, insulin pumps and an increasing list of new devices. The school nurse determines if and when specific nursing tasks are delegated and to whom, and provides training and supervision.

Licensed School Nurses attend to system-wide issues as well as individual and family issues. Their focus is to help children and youth do the best at their important life work - learning, growing and developing. School nurses help children and youth to be good students: preparing students to be ready to learn, willing and able, present and participating.

Find a Standards of Practice, trainings and practice tools the websites for the state and national professional organizations:

<u>School Nurse Organization of Minnesota</u> (www.minnesotaschoolnurses.org)

National Association of School Nurses (www.nasn.org)

MDE, RE Luehr, 8-2011