

Student Health and Nursing Services

Health and Wellness Unit



OVERVIEW

The goal of providing student health services in school is to maintain the physical, mental, and social health of children so they can benefit maximally from their educational opportunities.

Student health services should have oversight by a qualified School Nurse. School nurses support student success by providing health care through assessment, intervention, and follow-up for all children within the school setting. The school nurse addresses the physical, mental, emotional, and social health needs of students and supports their achievement in the learning process. The school nurse not only provides for the safety and care of students and staff but also addresses the need for integrating health solutions into the education setting.

STUDENT HEALTH AND SCHOOL NURSING SERVICES

A student's health status is directly related to his or her ability to learn. Children with unmet health needs have a difficult time engaging in the educational process. Over the past few decades the number of students in Colorado schools with a chronic health condition has greatly increased. Many of these students who were previously in therapeutic settings are now being educated in their local school in the least restrictive environment. Their right to participate is protected by federal law, including IDEA and Rehabilitation Act, Section 504.

Many students are coming to school with increasingly complex medical problems, technically intricate medical equipment, and complicated treatments (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2010). For example, management of Type 1 diabetes has become more complex as these students come to school with insulin pumps and continuous glucose monitoring devices that require constant monitoring by school staff. It is not uncommon to have students who are on ventilators, need gastrostomy tube feedings, or require catheterization. Being prepared to respond in an emergency during the school day for students with a life threatening allergic reaction or seizure disorder is imperative. The responsibility for managing the health needs of the student depends on a qualified school nurse to plan, train and carry out that care. In the recently passed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) there is a crucial provision that highlights the important work that school nurses do in chronic disease management.

School nurses identify vision, hearing, and other health issues in students that impede school performance, making it possible for students to receive needed referrals, treatments, and enabling them to achieve. They promote a healthy school environment through promoting infectious disease control and vaccination compliance. Studies show that immunization rates are higher when there is a school nurse present at school.

School absenteeism due to chronic illness is significant. Chronic absenteeism is a primary cause of low academic achievement and a powerful predictor of those students who may eventually drop out of school. Students who are frequently absent miss not only academics but also miss important socialization opportunities. Various studies have shown that children with a chronic health illness are absent more than their peers and as a result experience the poor academic outcomes associated with increased absenteeism. School nurses, through prevention and treatment of health and behavioral issues, save schools money by improving student attendance and on time grade progression.



2017-2018 data shows the percentage of students with the following chronic diseases in Colorado Schools:

- Asthma – 5.6%
- Life Threatening Allergies – 2.0%
- Type 1 Diabetes – 0.2%
- Seizures – 0.57%
- Mental Health – 2.0%
- High acuity – 0.4% (requiring one or more skilled nursing tasks during the school day)

The National Association of School Nurses recommends the following school nurse to student ratios based on student populations:

- 1:750 for students in the general population
- 1:225 in the student populations that may require daily professional school nursing services or interventions,
- 1:125 in student populations with complex health care needs, and
- 1:1 may be necessary for individual students who require daily and continuous professional nursing services.

Colorado is currently ranked 40th in the nation for school nurse to student ratio. The American Academy of Pediatrics 2016 policy statement recommends a full time nurse in every school. Healthy People 2020 has included an objective to increase the proportion of schools that have a full-time registered school nurse-to-student ratio of at least 1:750. (USDHHS/CDC, 2010)

Laws, Rules, Regulations

Legislation Impacting School Health Services:

Federal Legislation

- IDEA
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
- Every Student Succeeds Act

State Legislation (C.R.S.)

- Sight and hearing test - 22-1-116
- Student possession & administration of prescription medication/medical marijuana - 22-1-119.3
- Asthma, food allergy, and anaphylaxis health management - 22-1-119.5
- CPR requirement for coaches - 22-1-125.5
- Instruction in CPR and use of AED grants - 22-1-129
- Education of Children with Disabilities - 22-20-101
- Educator Licensing Act – Special Services License 19-3-304 Child Abuse and Reporting - 22-60.5-210
- Nurse Practice Act - 12-38-108

State Agency Rules & Regs (C.C.R.)

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE)

- School Immunizations - 6 CCR 1009-2
- Infectious Disease - 6 CCR 1009-1
- Rules & Regulations Governing Schools - 6 CCR 1010-6



Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

- Exceptional Student Educational Act - 1CCR 301-8
- Educator Licensing - 1CCR 301-37
- Asthma, food allergy, and anaphylaxis management in schools and self-carry of medication - 1 CCR 301-68
- School Health Professional Grant - 1 CCR 301-97

Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS)

- Childcare Licensing Rules - 12 CCR 2509-8

Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA)

- Delegation of Nursing Tasks - 3 CCR 716-1

Where can I learn more?

- Office of Health and Wellness
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- For more information visit the [School Nursing and Health webpages](#)
- [View all CDE fact sheets](#)