



Administrators Guide

Managing the School Nurse Resource

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Guidance on the role of the school nurse, including qualifications, responsibilities, definitions, and frequently asked questions.

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Administrators Guide: The School Nurse Resource

This document is provided by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), to give the local school district guidance on the role of the school nurse. The school nurse's purpose, qualifications, clinical responsibilities, educational responsibilities, and involvement in policy making as the district's health expert will be defined.

Why school nurses? School nurses improve the well-being, academic success, and life-long achievement of students. They help each child maintain an optimal state of health to enhance his or her education. Identification and treatment of health issues may lead to improved classroom behavior. The intervention of a school nurse may also lead to increased graduation rates/decreased dropout rates. In addition, Average Daily Attendance (ADA) will be impacted by the school nurse's positive influence on student health. The benefits of a school nurse also extend to staff wellness, keeping teachers in the classroom and facilitating learning.

Adequate staffing levels, or school nurse-to-student ratios, affect the delivery of school nursing services and the effectiveness of those services. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the National School Nurse Association all recommend the following minimum ratios of nurses to students depending on the needs of the student populations:

- 1:750 for students in the general population,
- 1:225 in 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.

Purpose

The school nurse is a professional with a specialized practice in the school setting. It is a multi-faceted role that supports student education through activities that promote physical, mental, emotional, and social health. The school nurse:

- provides direct health care to students, faculty and staff.
- provides leadership in the provision of health services.
- provides screening and referral of health conditions.
- promotes a healthy school environment.
- promotes health as a part of the coordinated school health team.
- leads in the development of health policies and programs.
- serves as a liaison between school personnel, family, community, and health care providers.

Qualifications

MDE has developed criteria that define qualifications and performance responsibilities of both the registered nurse (RN) and the licensed practical nurse (LPN) in the school setting. The school nurse shall:

- possess a valid Mississippi Nursing License.
- possess a minimum of one year work experience in a clinical health care setting.
- possess good verbal and communication skills with the ability to communicate with all age groups, families as well as school professionals.
- possess organizational and time management skills.
- possess the ability to work independently according to all nursing practice standards.

The district can add qualifications to this list that they find appropriate and acceptable. The district must use caution and avoid requirements that may conflict with nursing's governing bodies. An example of such a conflict is the delegation of medication administration.

Additional considerations for best school nurse practice:

- Ensure school nurse maintains current CPR certification.
- Verify and maintain personnel records including current copy of Mississippi license.
- Ensure available funding for clinical supplies, continuing education, and travel (within and outside of district).
- Provide a yearly evaluation using a school nurse-specific instrument.

Responsibilities

The school/district should prioritize the responsibilities according to the perceived need. Priorities may change as the school nurse evaluates the school health needs and recommends changes.

Clinical:

Currently there are no specifications on the adequate space for school nurses and school clinics. Consideration must be given to confidentiality when addressing health issues. When clinical responsibilities are the priority, these additional points should be considered:

- Establish specific clinic hours.
- Educate faculty and staff on appropriate referral to the health clinic.
- Provide supplies to faculty, allowing them to care for minor issues in the classroom.
- Screen, evaluate and refer general health issues that impact learning. These can include vision, hearing, scoliosis, dental, and growth.

- Manage students with chronic health diagnoses, including diabetes, asthma, allergy, seizures, etc. Management of these students requires Individualized Health Plans (IHP), parental consent, and physicians orders.
- Provide appropriate health services – including students, faculty and staff.
- Consider and plan for emergencies. The school nurse should participate in school, district, and community planning.
- Serve on the school health council as a resource for health information.
- Maintain student health records. Health records are not part of a student’s cumulative record, and should be maintained in a locked, confidential location in the school nurse’s office/clinic.
- Review immunization records as needed.
- Collect and report clinical data as appropriate for MDE, Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH), or various grant administrators as appropriate.
- Participate in Individualized Education Program (IEP) process for the student with health-related special needs.
- Participate as a member of the Teacher Support Team (TST) for Three Tier Intervention.
- Establish school/district guidelines using available resources from MDE, MSDH, Mississippi School Nurse Association (MSNA) and Mississippi Board of Nursing (MBN). Also consider national resources such as National Association of School Nurses (NASN).

Educational

When the school nurse role is prioritized as educational, she/he can conduct classes on various levels. The levels are identified as: student focused education, faculty/staff education, and professional education. The school nurse is not to take the place of a teacher. They have no formal training in school discipline or classroom management. The role they play should compliment and support the classroom activities. If the school nurse is to have a priority in educational responsibilities, then planning time similar to teacher planning periods must be provided.

Student Focused Education

- Assess the needs of the students considering age, current community climate, and environment.
- Coordinate educational projects for the entire school/district such as hand washing.
- Teach specific topics in classrooms, including tobacco/drug use, and hygiene.
- Know the curriculum framework provided by MDE in health education, nutrition, and physical education. Be prepared to teach or support classroom teachers with additional information as needed.
- Develop bulletin boards or other school displays.

- Always be available for individual educational needs such as management of diabetic pump.

Faculty/Staff Education

- Provide for specific education on health care issues and their management in the classroom such as dealing with allergy, asthma or diabetes.
- Provide for emergency response in classroom/school/district.
- Promote staff wellness through individualized information.
- Stay aware of current events and trends related to school health issues such as flu tracking and related absences.

Professional Education

- School nurse must attend yearly training with the MDE, Office of Healthy Schools.
- School nurse must remain current in certain certifications such as CPR, Asthma, and Diabetes.
- School nurse should attend specialty school nurse training such as MSNA or NASN yearly conferences.
- School nurse should be encouraged to remain current on all health issues that affect the school population. Consideration may be given to a formal setting. Take care to discuss the possible barriers and advantages.

Policy Making:

As the on-site health expert, the school nurse has a vast knowledge of safe and healthy procedures that should be considered when developing policies. Below are some suggested areas where they can positively contribute.

- Review student and faculty hand books, providing information on appropriate actions when sick - such as being fever free 24 hours before returning to school.
- Participate as a member of the school health council.
- Review and develop a medication policy following appropriate nursing standards.
- Participate in other health policy development such as random drug testing, HIV policy, and food allergy policy.
- Initiate and maintain a relationship with local EMS, to facilitate school/community response to emergencies.
- Participate in the development of school/district emergency plan.

Definitions

Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA): CNAs are not licensed health care professionals. Although they may assist students in some areas, they do not satisfy the legal requirements for licensed health care professionals.

Emergency: A serious situation that arises suddenly and threatens the life, limb, or welfare, of one or more persons; a crisis. An emergency creates a type of implied consent when the individual is unable to consent to treatment that is immediately necessary.

IEP: An Individualized Education Program is a written statement for a child with a disability that is developed through a collaborative process with the child's parents and an interdisciplinary team in the child's school.

IHP: An Individualized Health Plan is a written plan of care developed by an RN for children with acute or chronic health issues. Parents and other health care providers involved with the child participate in the development of the plan.

Licensure: Authorization to practice nursing as a registered nurse or a licensed practical nurse. (RN or LPN)

Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN): A person who is licensed in practical nursing, and possesses basic knowledge of the biological, physical, behavioral, psychological and sociological sciences and of nursing procedures which do not require the substantial skill, judgment and knowledge required of a registered nurse. This person serves under the direction of a Registered Nurse or a licensed physician or dentist.

Nurse Practice Act: A statute enacted by the legislature of a state and the administrative rules and regulations that delineate the legal scope of practice of nursing within the jurisdiction.

Parental Consent: Written consent from a parent that is required before a student can be administered medication or be a recipient of health care procedures in the school setting.

Physician's orders: Statements written by a student's physician/health care provider which direct the medical care at school. The orders are valid for one year unless changed or time-limited by a physician.

Registered Nurse (RN): A person licensed as a registered nurse, who possesses substantial knowledge of the biological, physical, behavioral, psychological and sociological sciences and of nursing theory as the basis for assessment, diagnosis, planning, intervention and evaluation in the promotion and maintenance of health; management of individuals' responses to illness, injury or infirmity; the restoration of optimum function; or the achievement of dignified death.

Self administration: The ingestion, application, injection, or inhalation of his/her own medication by a student in school.

Scope of Practice: The legally authorized range of activities and functions performed by licensed nurses and based on competence of the nurse, availability of necessary resources, and generally accepted standards of practice.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Can I hire an LPN instead of an RN to save costs?

NO. The position of the Mississippi Board of Nursing is that it the LPN does not have the knowledge base to independently practice school nursing. The LPN must have direct RN supervision daily.

Q. Is there a recommended salary scale for school nurses?

YES. The schedule considers the nurse's years of experience in nursing and the educational level. Nurses can also seek National Certification and may receive a \$6,000 annual supplement.

Q. Is there a specific job description developed for school nurses?

NO. The Mississippi Department of Education/Office of Healthy Schools has developed the "Criteria for a School Nurse" which describes the qualifications and performance responsibilities that can guide you in development of your nurse's job description.

Q. Is there an available school nurse evaluation instrument?

YES. A sample evaluation is included at the end of this document. A nurse-to-nurse evaluation is best. The final page of the evaluation can be used to get a snapshot of how the nurse interacts with faculty/staff and students.

Q. Can a secretary administer medications?

NO. However, a secretary can assist a child - if designated by an administrator and trained by the school nurse - in the self-administration of his/her medication.

Q. Is training required for persons assisting students with medications?

YES. It is likely that your school nurse can not be available to administer medications 100% of the time. Other school personnel who have been identified by the principal to assist with medications during the nurse's absence must be trained. The "Assisted Self Administration Curriculum" is provided by the MBN and should be taught by the school nurse. Training records must be kept.

Q. Can a parent come to school and perform a health care procedure or administer medication for their child.

YES, but they can not be required to perform this function. The school is required to make reasonable accommodations for these students.

School Nurse Evaluation Form

Name: _____

Date: _____

Evaluator: _____

School Site: _____

- 1—performance needs improvement
- 2—performance meets expectations
- 3—performance exceeds expectations

Standards:

- A. Clinical Knowledge- utilizes clinical knowledge for decision-making
- B. Nursing Process-uses problem-solving in nursing practice
- C. Special Needs Students-contributes to the education of students with special needs through assessment, screening, and appropriate nursing care.
- D. Communication-effective written, verbal and nonverbal communication.
- E. Program Management-maintains an efficient school health program.
- F. Collaboration within the School System and Community Health System-works with others involved with students health.
- G. Health Education-assist with health education to gain optimal wellness.
- H. Research-contributes to school health through participation in data collection.
- I. Professional/Personal Development-promotes and pursues quality health care, and healthy lifestyles, seen through professional enhancement and conduct.

Performance Indicators:

A. Clinical Knowledge

- 1) _____ Demonstrates knowledge and skills in health assessment techniques.
- 2) _____ Is a leader in school community activities as related to health issues.
- 3) _____ Interprets and uses health information with good judgment.
- 4) _____ Uses health services activities as an opportunity for health teaching.
- 5) _____ Serves as a resource person to school staff and parents.

B. Nursing Process

- 1) _____ Demonstrates ability to set goals, make decision, and take action in school health issues.
- 2) _____ Exercises professional judgment in the work place.
- 3) _____ Collects data regarding nursing services given.

- 4) _____ Develops individualized care plans when appropriate.
- 5) _____ Understands needs for and maintains confidential documentation of interventions.

C. Special Needs Students

- 1) _____ Possesses knowledge of the Special Services process, regulations on evaluation, required documentation, and state/federal laws.
- 2) _____ Participates in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process of students with chronic illness or disabilities.
- 3) _____ Performs skilled nursing procedures as necessary in a safe competent and efficient manner.

D. Communication

- 1) _____ Uses clear positive written communication holding to the values of grammar and spelling.
- 2) _____ Uses effective verbal and non-verbal skills to express positive outcomes.

E. Program Management

- 1) _____ Maintains safe, orderly and attractive work area with appropriate environment according to age of students.
- 2) _____ Develops plan to assure safe health care in the absence of the nurse.
- 3) _____ Anticipates supply needs.
- 4) _____ Plans and communicates with principal and faculty to facilitate the school health program with minimal building schedule interruption.
- 5) _____ Participates in the capacity of school health advisor.
- 6) _____ Trains, supervises and evaluates others that are involved in health services delivery.

F. Collaboration within school system and community system

- 1) _____ Collaborates with parents, teachers and other professionals in planning delivery of health services.
- 2) _____ Functions as school/home/community liaison in student/family health concerns.
- 3) _____ Identifies and makes referrals to appropriate resources for student/family needs.

G. Health Education

- 1) _____ Organizes and participates in school/community health education.
- 2) _____ Participates in classroom health instruction.
- 3) _____ Provides individual health teaching for students/family as needed.
- 4) _____ Promotes student, staff and school safety.

H. Research

- 1) _____ Compiles information regarding health services to be reported to superintendent/school board in form of yearly reports.
- 2) _____ Prepares appropriate reports for Department of Education, Department of Health, and professional nursing organizations.

I. Professional/Personal Development

- 1) _____ Keeps grooming and attire appropriate for professional duties.
- 2) _____ Contributes to positive professional image of school health through the practice of good health habits.
- 3) _____ Pursues continued professional growth.
- 4) _____ Participates in professional school nurse activities.

Comments:

Nurse: _____
Signature

Evaluator: _____
Signature

School Nurse Questionnaire Form

Nurse: _____ Date: _____ School: _____

- 1—performance needs improvement
- 2—performance meets expectations
- 3—performance exceeds expectations

- A) _____ The school nurse is effective in her job performance.
- B) _____ The school nurse gives the faculty/staff the perception of caring when interacting with themselves and their students.
- C) _____ The school nurse gives the student the perception of caring.
- D) _____ The school nurse demonstrates an honest caring attitude that invites student trust.
- E) _____ The school nurse is available to students/faculty for counseling and other individual help.

Comments:
