

Student Health and Nursing Services

School Health Services Office



COLORADO
Department of Education

Overview

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. These professionals not only provide for the safety and care of students and staff but also address 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 their 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 students who were previously in therapeutic settings now attend 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. It is imperative to respond to emergencies during the school day for students with a life-threatening allergic reaction or seizure disorder. The responsibility for managing the health needs of the student depends on a qualified school nurse to plan, train and carry out care. In the recently passed Every Student Succeeds Act, there is a crucial provision that highlights the important work that school nurses do in chronic disease management.

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

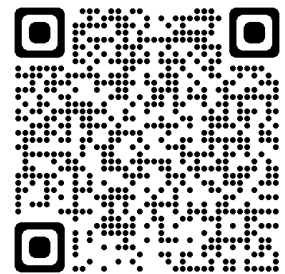
School absenteeism due to chronic illness is significant. Chronic absenteeism is a primary cause of low academic achievement and a powerful predictor of those students who may eventually drop out of school. Students who are frequently absent miss not only academics but also important socialization opportunities.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

Laws, Rules, Regulations

Federal and state legislation impacting School Health Services are summarized in this document:

[Essential School Health Services](#)

To learn more about Student Health and Nursing Services use this QR Code.



2021-22 data* shows the percentage of students with the following chronic diseases in Colorado Schools:

- Asthma – 6%
- Life Threatening Allergies – 2.3%
- Type 1 Diabetes – 0.31%
- Seizures – 0.65%
- Mental Health – 3.8%
- High acuity – 0.74% (requiring one or more skilled nursing tasks during the school day)

*This data is based on the voluntary CDE School Health Data report and represents 79% of the total student population. Due to the low percentage of population represented these data are NOT generalizable.

School Nurse Workloads and Student Acuity

The [National Association of School Nurses](#) supports that access to a registered, professional nurse can improve students' health, safety, and educational achievement. All students need access to a school nurse every day. In addition to the number of students covered, staffing for school nursing coverage must include acuity, social needs of students, community/school infrastructure, and characteristics of nursing staff. School nurse workloads should be evaluated on at least an annual basis to meet the health and safety needs of school communities.

The [American Academy of Pediatrics 2016](#) policy statement recommends a full time nurse in every school.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

- For more information about school nursing, visit the School Nursing and Health Webpage: https://www.cde.state.co.us/healthandwellness/snh_home
- To view contact information, visit the School Nursing and Health Contact Us Webpage: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/healthandwellness/contactus>
- To view all CDE fact sheets, visit the CDE Fact Sheets and FAQs Webpage: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/factsheetsandfags>