



POSITION STATEMENT

Volunteers in the Health Office

History:

As the link between schools and communities becomes stronger, volunteers become increasingly important in a variety of roles in the schools. Volunteers have diverse backgrounds, credentials and levels of expertise. The primary role of a volunteer is to augment the professional staff in order to provide quality services to the students. Volunteers may include licensed (e.g., registered nurses, physicians) and unlicensed health care providers, (e.g., nursing assistants and parent helpers).

Description of Issue:

It is important that the following issues are considered when seeking the use of volunteers in the health office:

- Adherence to Washington state laws and regulations, including the nurse and medical practice acts and safe health practice.
- Quality assurance that the standard of care for the specialty of school health is met.
- Risk management for individuals and school districts to decrease vulnerability to exposure, injury, litigation and abandoned volunteer programs.
- Liability protection for individuals and districts for potential claims of injury and negligent practice.
- Supervision time and competency to meet regulatory and quality assurance requirements.
- Confidentiality of health information.
- Security clearance as required by law to provide for a safe school environment.
- The need for the consistent presence of a service provider (i.e., professional school nurse) focused on school and student goals.

Rationale:

The health issues of students and schools are growing in number and are increasingly complex, varied and prone to litigation. The school nurse is uniquely qualified to develop and provide school health services. Resource constraints may limit the capability to deliver the desired level of comprehensive health services. Therefore,

volunteers may be of assistance in augmenting the delivery of health services. The school is a unique environment in which to provide health services, and consequently the utilization of volunteers requires careful evaluation.

Conclusion:

It is the position of SNOW that school nurses should take a leadership role in helping districts make responsible decisions regarding the use of volunteers in school health programs. The district's legal counsel should always be included in such decision making. Expectations for the service delivered by volunteers should be of the caliber expected of regular staff. School systems can best assure quality health care in their environments by having an employed school nurse on site to supervise the programs and service providers.

Adopted: March 2002