



POSITION STATEMENT

The Professional School Nurse Roles and Responsibilities Education, Certification, and Licensure

Description of Issue:

The ability to learn at school is directly related to the status of a student's health. Identification of health related barriers to learning are crucial to the provision of an appropriate educational plan for every student. The School nurse supports student growth toward achieving Washington State Essential Learning Requirements as directed by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The school nurse serves as the health advocate for all school children, focusing on the promotion of healthful living styles and the prevention of illness or disability.

Rationale:

School nurses strengthen and facilitate the educational process by improving and protecting the health status of children and staff by identifying and assisting in the removal or modification of health related barriers to the learning and teaching process for individual children. The school nurse has the educational background, experience, and competence to provide preventative health education and intervention, health assessment, and referral services.

Professional Education:

Nursing is a unique discipline with it's own knowledge base and area of responsibility. Nursing includes the diagnosis and treatment of human responses to actual or potential health problems. The practice of nursing is an art and an applied science, which assists the individual to achieve maximum health within his/her own capacity. The uniqueness of school nursing stems from its perspective of care, concern for the whole person, respect for individual rights, and the promotion of wellness and growth.

Professional nursing education is based upon and combines a liberal education with the study of nursing science and practice. This forms the basis of making sound nursing decisions and a framework for consistent use of critical thinking. Professional nursing is built upon knowledge from natural sciences, behavioral science, and nursing science and theory.

Certification and Licensure:

School nursing is a separate and distinct specialty within the nursing and educational professions, and therefore, competence in specific area of health and education is needed in order for the school nurse to act as health advocates for school age children.

Accountability:

School nurses adhere to the standards of Washington State nursing licensure and school nursing practice as established by the National Association of School Nurses and the Nurse Practice Act of Washington.

Functions:

The practice of nursing by school nurses occurs with the complex and unpredictable setting of the school agency. The school nurse acts as a care provider, advocate, change agent, manager, and educator. The school nurse collaborates with other education and health care professionals to provide optimal school nursing care to the school community.

The functions of the specialized school nurse include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Promotes and protects the optimal health status of children.
2. Provides health assessments.
 - a. Obtains health and developmental history.

- b. Screens and evaluates finding of deficits in vision, hearing, scoliosis, and growth, etc.
- c. Observes the child for development and health patterns in making nursing assessment and nursing diagnosis.
- d. Identifies deviant health findings.
3. Develops and implements a health plan.
 - a. Interprets the health status of pupils to parents and school personnel.
 - b. Initiates referrals to parents, school personnel, and community health resources for intervention, remediation, and follow-through.
 - c. Provides on-going health counseling with pupils, parents, school personnel, and health agencies.
 - d. Recommends and helps to implement modification of school programs to meet students' health needs.
 - e. Utilizes existing health resources to provide appropriate care of students.
4. Maintains, evaluates, and interprets cumulative health data to accommodate individual needs of students.
5. Participates as the health team specialist of the child education evaluation team to develop the Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
6. Plans and implements school health management protocols for the child with special health needs, including the administration of medication.
7. Participates in home visits to assess the family's needs as related to the child's health.
8. Develops procedures and provides for crisis intervention for acute illness, injury, and emotional disturbances.
9. Promotes and assists in the control of communicable diseases through preventative immunization programs, early detection, surveillance, and reporting and follow-up of contagious diseases.
10. Recommends provisions for a school environment conducive to learning.
11. Provides health education.
 - a. Teaches parenting skills as they relate to child development and health needs of children.
 - b. Provides direct health education and health counseling to assist students and families in making decisions on health and life styles that affect health.
 - c. Participates in health education directly and indirectly for the improvement of health by teaching people to become more assertive health consumers and to assume greater responsibility for their own health.
 - d. Counsels students concerning physical, mental, and emotional issues in order to facilitate responsible decision making.
 - e. Serves as a resource person to the classroom teacher and administrator in health instruction and as a member of the health curriculum development committee.
12. Coordinates school and community health activities and serves as a liaison person between the home, school, and community.
13. Acts as a resource person in promoting health careers.
14. Provides health counseling for staff.
15. Provides leadership and/or support for staff wellness programs.
16. Engages in research and evaluation of school health services to act as a change agent for school health programs and school nursing practices.
17. Assists in the formation of health policies, goals, and objectives for the school district.

Conclusion:

It is the position of the School Nurse Organization of Washington that professional school nurses should be employed to provide quality health care to students in the school setting. School nurses should be registered nurses, licensed to practice nursing by the Washington State Department of Health and the Nursing Commission.

The School Nurse Organization of Washington promotes, supports, and represents the school nurse who has a height level of academic preparation. SNOW believes that a baccalaureate degree in nursing from an accredited college or university, and ESA certification is optimum preparation for entry into school nursing.

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