

The Role and Responsibilities of a School Nurse

Qualifications for CDE Licensure

- Bachelor of Science in Nursing and
- Current license to practice nursing in Colorado
OR
- Bachelor's degree in another area, and
- Current national certification in, and
- Three years of experience in school nursing, and
- Current license to practice nursing in Colorado

Role of the School Nurse

- Ensures that health needs of students are addressed during the school day
- Manages communicable disease outbreaks
- Directs the immunization program
- Oversees delegated nursing tasks
- Develops and implements health care plans
- Serves as liaison between teachers, administrators, parents, and community health care providers
- Provides for the care of acute health care needs, including emergencies
- Conducts health assessments
- Participates in the identification process of children with special needs
- Oversees vision and hearing screening programs

Delegation

- The process of assigning a nursing task to a person who is not a nurse
- Only a registered nurse can legally delegate
- Only a registered nurse can decide when, what and to whom to delegate
- The Colorado Nurse Practice Act (<http://www.dora.state.co.us/nursing/statutesandrules/NursePracticeAct.pdf>) governs the practice of all nursing, including delegation
- Delegation becomes necessary when staffing ratios are too large
- Delegation is a process that requires ongoing training, supervision, and documentation
- A delegated task may not be further delegated to another except by the nurse

Medication Administration

Schools should establish policies related to medication administration that include the following:

- Prescribed medications must be administered to children during the school day if they are necessary to enable the student to participate fully in the academic program.
- The administration of medications may be delegated to unlicensed assistive personnel (UAP) by the school nurse.
- All unlicensed persons administering medications at school must take a medication administration course prior to delegation.
- Delegation must be updated annually.
- Protocols for requiring written authorization from a licensed prescriber (health care practitioner) to be kept on file at the school when a medication must be administered.
- Medications must be in a properly pharmacy-labeled container.
- Parents must provide written permission for the administration of medication.
- Medications administered on field trips may be delegated on a one-time basis to school personnel accompanying the class on the field trip.
- All medications administered must be documented on a medication administration log for each student.
- If a child needs to carry and self administer medication, the school nurse must write a health care plan and formulate a contract that defines student, parent, and school responsibilities.

Special Education

- Only the school nurse can write and interpret the health assessment for an IEP.
- Vision and hearing screening results must be recorded on the IEP.
- Health information should be collected on students having an initial evaluation to determine whether the student has special health care needs that impact the child's ability to succeed in school.

- Special health care needs should be referred to in the IEP. This information can be gathered by any member of the IEP team, but the school nurse is responsible for interpreting pertinent medical and health-related data.
- A health care plan that addresses health care needs that impact the child's educational program should be developed and referred to in the IEP.
- The health care plan should be stored in the child's individual health record so that necessary changes can be made to the health care plan without reconvening the IEP team.
- Further information about health-related information can be found at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/RSS-Nurse.asp>.

Identification of Health Issues

- Students with health needs should be identified at the start of each school year.
- Classroom teachers may be given a list of students in their classrooms that have health concerns that have potential to impact learning and safety.

- This teacher list of students should be kept confidential, but may be shared with those who substitute for the teacher in the classroom.
- The nurse should determine which of these students will need an individualized health care plan.

Health Care Plans

- A health care plan is written by the professional school nurse (RN) for students with a health condition that requires the performance of specific treatments such as non-routine medications, health treatments, emergency actions, or invasive health procedures.
- A health care plan helps to ensure that all necessary health information, needs, and plans are considered to maximize the student's participation and performance in school.
- Information in the health care plan should be kept confidential as mandated in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).