

ROLE OF THE CREDENTIALLED SCHOOL NURSE

STATEMENT

The California School Nurses Organization believes that the credentialed school nurse, as a pivotal member of the coordinated school health system, answers the health care needs of school children as they relate to education. If a child is not healthy, then that child's ability to learn is compromised. The credentialed school nurse, as the supervisor of health, is a leader in supporting student success in the multifaceted role of planner, coordinator, provider of care, communicator, educator, and advocate. The scope of practice of the credentialed school nurse is dynamic and ever changing as laws are enacted to address the complex health needs of students.

The credentialed school nurse is a Bachelor's degree prepared registered nurse, licensed by the California Board of Registered Nursing and credentialed with a specialization in health authorizing services as a school nurse by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

The role of the credentialed school nurse is defined in Education Code 49426. It reads in part: "School nurses strengthen and facilitate the educational process by improving and protecting the health status of children and by identification and assistance in the removal or modification of health-related barriers to learning in individual children. The major focus of school health services is the prevention of illness and disability, and the early detection and correction of health problems. The credentialed school nurse is especially prepared and uniquely qualified in preventive health, health assessment and referral procedures."

Within this broad definition, the credentialed school nurse uses her nursing skills and professional judgment to design and implement a health services program, which ensures that all students receive the maximum benefit from their educational experience. This is accomplished by working collaboratively with students, families, teachers, other members of the multidisciplinary team, and utilizing resources within the community, to meet the physical, mental, emotional and social health needs of students.

On a daily basis the credentialed school nurse's role may include the following:

- Assessing and evaluating the health and developmental status of students
- Communicating with students, families and health care providers
- Interpreting assessments and medical information to school staff working with the student
- Designing and implementing an Individualized School Health Plan, Emergency Care Plan, Individual Educational Plan or Section 504 Plan related to physical health care needs or chronic illnesses
- Determining the appropriate level of care for students with specialized health care needs and training, monitoring and supervising licensed and unlicensed staff
- Providing case management services for students
- Counseling students and parents regarding health or school related issues and providing information and referral to community services
- Administering and monitoring medications

- Serving as a resource to staff and providing inservices on a variety of health topics
- Developing curriculum and delivering comprehensive health education to students
- Promoting a healthy school environment for the emotional and physical safety of students
- Providing direct services to students through screening programs and care for illnesses and injuries

RATIONALE

California schools must address the diverse and complex health problems of today's students.

In addition to health issues, schools must cope with problems related to immigration, homelessness, substance abuse and poverty. Many of our children come with issues that make learning difficult. In addition to societal pressures, they may have undetected health conditions, poorly managed chronic illnesses or complex medical problems that were at one time only managed at inpatient settings. Economic conditions and increased demands upon credentialed school nurses have required, in many instances, the addition of licensed and unlicensed personnel to assist in meeting the health care needs of students.

As the health care expert within the school and an advocate for students and families, the credentialed school nurse uses professional skills, nursing judgment and leadership ability to create a safe school environment, which supports the well being, academic success and life-long achievement of students.

*Reference: California Education Code and Regulations
Nursing Practice Act
CSNO: Professional School Nurse Preparation, Adopted 1998
NASN Issue Brief School Health Nursing Services Role in Health Care;
2002
CSNO: By the Year 2010; 1/01
American Academy of Pediatrics: The Role of the School Nurse in
Providing School Health Services; 11/01
CSNO: Adopted 11/01, Revised 11/04, Board of Directors, California
School Nurses Organization*