

Recommendations of the Connecticut School Nurse Advisory Council

January 2024

Association of School Nurses of Connecticut

Verna Bernard Jones MS RN NCSN, American Federation of Teachers Connecticut

Donna Kosiorowski MS RN NCSN-E, Connecticut Nurses Association

Marysia Chabotte MSN RN, Connecticut Association for Health Care at Home

Barbara Ziogas MD, CT Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Sheila McKay, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education

Patrick Stirk, Connecticut Association of Public Schools Superintendents

Dr. Anthony Salvatore, Connecticut Federation of School Administrators

CONSULTANTS

Chlo-Anne Bobrowski MSN, State Department of Education

Christine Velazquez, Department of Public Health

CONTENTS

Background and Purpose of Report

Recommendations:

- I. Professional Development
- II. School Nurse Staffing
- III. The Delivery of School Health Services by Nurses in Schools and Other Matters That Affect School Nurses
- IV. Protocols for Emergency Medication

Background and Purpose of Report

Section one of Public Act No. 13-187, *An Act Concerning a School Nurse Advisory Council and An Advisory Council on Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorder Associated with Streptococcal Infections*, effective July 1, 2013 established the School Nurse Advisory Council.

The Council is in its 10th year and meets monthly from September to January and once at legislative session end. Meetings are open to the public. Annual reports are submitted to the Co-Chairs of the Education and Public Health Committees and submitted to the Commissioners of the State Department of Education and the State Department of Public Health.

Members of the Council give careful deliberation to the needs of districts in Connecticut and to state and national regulations, guidelines, and best practices.

Recommendations

I. Professional Development and Qualifications for School Nurses:

Ia. Professional Development

Over time legislation regarding professional development increasingly encompasses noncurricular topics and single disease legislation. In 2023, added to the list is generalized training for all certified staff on seizures. (An Act Concerning Education Mandates Relief and Other Technical and Assorted Revisions and Additions to the Education and Early Childhood Statutes (2023)). (*Noted in this

legislation-professional development requirements for districts refers to certified personnel only, an example of exclusion of school nurses.)

Members of the Council unanimously expressed concern about the volume of topics for professional development. The Council supports a professional development committee, including educators, to review professional development to assess essential topics for staff. The Council emphasizes that school nurses provide training based on the individual health needs of students which include student specific diagnoses, symptoms, and individual emergency plans or individual health care plans.

Ib. Qualifications for School Nurses

42 years have passed with no revisions to the 1982 regulations for school nurses. It is, and has been, the recommendation of this Council to see the 1982 regulations change.

<https://statepolicies.nasbe.org/health/categories/health-services/school-nurse-qualifications/connecticut>

Recommendations related to CGS 10-212 are:

- **Revise regulations written in 1982 to include entry level requirement for school nurses as a Bachelor of Science in Nursing or a related field.**
- **Nurses entering without a Bachelor degree will have 5 years to gain the degree.**
- **Nurses currently serving as school nurses will be grandfathered.**
- **Create a Special Services Endorsement for school nurses, in collaboration with SDE and ASNC, to create professional recognition and equity afforded to every educational professional.**

School social workers, speech and language pathologists, psychologists, and counselors are licensed by the Department of Public Health as well as certified by the State Department of Education. It is time for the same opportunity for school nurses as their professional colleagues.

Education and role specific preparation for school nurses is a critical contributor toward achievement of the goals of Connecticut schools. Children in Connecticut schools deserve highly qualified school nurses. Over 50% of school nurses and school nurse supervisors currently have a Bachelor degree; additional nurses hold a Master degree or higher. School nurses support instruction and academic success. Currently there are no standards to prepare nurses for a role in school. Collaboration with stakeholders and higher education to develop a curriculum and practicum is in process. Superintendents expressed concern that increasing requirements for school nurses might cause challenges in filling school nurse positions. However, most Council members believe that identifying school nurses as certified staff will make the position more desirable and improve the pool of candidates.

Supporting evidence:

June 2023 *neaToday* provides evidence of why school nursing shortages exist. “With low pay, misunderstood roles about their value, and high stress on the job, school nurse shortages persist.... School nurses are leaving the profession to work in hospitals or nursing homes for higher pay. Advocacy for school nurses can help keep them in their jobs.”

November 2023 *School Nurse*, Kate King DNP, President of the National Association of School Nurses, *said* “Disparities between compensation, demands of the job and systemic job structures are causing...school nurses to retire early, move to more desirable positions or leave the profession entirely...Leaders and the educational system must provide equity, giving school nurses what they need to succeed in the profession.”

November 2023 *Shelton Herald* article *Advocates Push Reforms as School Districts Struggle to Fill Vacancies*, Representative Jeff Currey is quoted” Teacher certifications and processes and regulations haven’t really had an overhaul in close to 30 years.” Since the same is true for school nurses, with the exception that it has been almost 42 years for school nurses, it seems to be the perfect time to achieve

certification for school nurses. That is the ask- equity and professional recognition as certified school staff to reflect who school nurses are and what they contribute to the academic success of children.

- II. **School Nurse Staffing**
Recommendation for a qualified nurse supervisor, preferably without a school assignment.
- III. **The Delivery of Health Care Services by School Nurses in Schools and Other Matters that Affect School Nurses**
Recommendation for qualified School Medical Advisors to serve in consultation with school nurses and school districts.
- IV. **Protocols for Emergency Medication Administration**
No recommendations.

Summary of recommendations:

Section I. Professional Development and Requirements for School Nurses

- a. **Develop a professional development committee, including educators, to review professional development to assess essential topics for staff.**
- b. **Revise regulations written in 1982 CGS 10-212- Require Bachelor of Science in Nursing or related field.**
Nurses entering without a Bachelor degree will have 5 years to gain the degree.
Nurses employed at the time of implementation will be grandfathered.
- c. **Create a Special Services Endorsement for School Nurses in collaboration with SDE and ASNC, to achieve professional recognition and equity afforded to every educational professional.**

Section III. The Delivery of Health Care Services by School Nurses in Schools and Other Matters that Affect School Nurses

- a. **Qualified School Medical Advisors to serve in consultation with school nurses and school districts.**
- b. **Maintain Medical Exemptions for vaccines- no religious, moral, or philosophical.**

Recognition to Council members and those who review this document for their dedication and efforts.

Submitted to:

Co-chairs of Education Committee
Co-chairs of Public Health Committee
Commissioner of Education SDE
Commissioner of Public Health DPH

Respectfully submitted by,

Donna Kosiorowski MS RN NCSN
Verna Bernard Jones MS RN NCSN
Co-Chairs, School Nurse Advisory Council

Defined in the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), the term 'specialized instructional support personnel' means- "(i) school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists; and "(ii) other qualified professional personnel, such as school nurses, speech language pathologists, and school librarians, involved in providing assessment, diagnosis, counseling, educational, therapeutic, and other necessary services (including related services as that term is defined in section 602 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1401) as part of a comprehensive program to meet student needs."