

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONNECTICUT SCHOOL NURSE ADVISORY COUNCIL

JANUARY 2018

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Background and Purpose of the 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 makes recommendations to the Commissioners of Public Health and Education and the joint standing committees of the General Assembly on matters related to education and public health including (1) professional development for school nurses; (2) school nurse staffing levels; (3) the delivery of health care services by school nurses in schools and other matters that affect school nurses; (4) protocols for Emergency Medication Administration; and (5) protocols for evaluating certain temporary medical conditions that may be symptomatic of serious illnesses or injuries.

The Council is in its fourth year and meets monthly from September through May. Annual reports are submitted prior to February 1.

Schools in Connecticut are under local control, resulting in school health services, school nurse professional development, staffing levels and health services protocols that vary from district to district. Members of the School Nurse Advisory Council give careful deliberation to the needs of districts in Connecticut in consideration of state and national regulations, guidelines and best practice.

Recommendations are put forward with the support of the:

- American Federation of Teachers, Connecticut, AFL-CIO
- Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE)
- Association of School Nurses of Connecticut (ASNC)
- Connecticut Association for Health Care At Home
- Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS)
- Connecticut Nurses Association (CNA)
- Connecticut Federation Of School Administrators
- Connecticut Chapter Of The American Academy Of Pediatrics (AAP)

Recommendations

I. Professional Development for School Nurses

The Council recognizes the lack of pre-service education and formal preparation for school nurses. In order to function in the school setting, nurses need support and education designed to meet the physical, emotional and socioeconomic needs of today's students. School nurses serve as leaders in the school community to develop and implement health policies and programs. The school nurse must have expertise and knowledge related to school health, health promotion and health education. Using clinical knowledge and judgment, the school nurse provides health care to students, performs health screenings and assessments, ensures compliance with immunization requirements, facilitates referrals to healthcare providers and medical homes and serves as a liaison between home, community and healthcare providers.

School nurses participate on multidisciplinary school teams including, but not limited to, PPT, 504, Attendance, mental health, Wellness and Crisis.

With increasing numbers of students with special health care needs included with non-disabled peers, the school nurse role has expanded. The ability to care for students with a variety of complex syndromes and rapidly changing technology is inherent in the role of the school nurse.

Professionals in all fields are expected to participate in professional development to remain current. Equally important is professional development relevant to school nursing in support of highly qualified school nurses with appropriate education and experience. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), in conjunction with the Association of School Nurses of Connecticut (ASNC), presents a 2-day annual school nurse orientation program for new school nurses. Curriculum includes school health law, standards of practice, school nurse competencies and the role of the school nurse in special education and Section 504. New school nurses frequently have little prior experience in a school setting. Professional development is necessary to function in an evolving educational environment. School nurses must be prepared to serve as members of a multi-disciplinary team to support student achievement with the goal to keep students in school, in class, ready to learn. Through interdisciplinary and interagency collaborations, school nurses can obtain additional opportunities for professional development. Partnerships and collaborations can support the goal of ongoing professional development.

CGS 10-212-a Qualifications for School Nurses, dated 1982, require that school nurses participate in a minimum of 10 hours of professional development every two years¹. The School Nurse Advisory Council puts forth the following recommendation:

In addition to professional development requirements specified by CGS 10-212-a (10 hours every 2 years), all new Connecticut school nurses should complete 12 hours of education using a curriculum approved by CSDE in collaboration with the Association of School Nurses (ASNC) and Connecticut Nurses' Association (CNA) within one year of hire. A standard for such education results in health outcomes that benefit students and enhance educational outcomes.

Additional recommendations related to CGS 10-212 pending for 2017-18 dependent on input from all stakeholders.

II. School Nurse Staffing

Recommendations for 2018-19 are pending dependent on input from all stakeholders.

¹ CT Public Health Code, sec. 10-212-5. <http://www.dir.ct.gov/dph/PHC/browse.asp>.

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

- a. "Since 2004, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), as part of its ongoing efforts to support and expand school health services provided to Connecticut students, continues the process of data collection for school health services. This process is designed to assist the CSDE to understand the status of school health services in Connecticut school districts, the needs of school districts and students in the area of school health services and progress being made in these areas over time. As one component of these ongoing efforts, the CSDE commissioned the Center for Collaborative Evaluation and Strategic Change (CCESC) at EDUCATION CONNECTION to develop an online survey to collect information regarding the status of school health services from school districts throughout Connecticut."

Stakeholders including, but not limited to, legislators, national organizations, educators, health care providers, access the survey.

- b. The delivery and provision of school health services differs significantly among Connecticut's school districts. The School Nurse Advisory Council recognizes that the CSDE's *annual* School Health Services Program Information Survey is the only state-wide systematic resource that provides data specifically related to the health status of students and the health services provided to students within Connecticut's schools. This valuable data source is used to quantify and qualify the need for school health programs that support student access to their education and the educational environment.
- c. 2016 complete survey is found at:
http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/deps/health/2016_full_report.pdf

IV. Protocols for Emergency Medication Administration

Recent legislation is placing more and more responsibility for emergency medication administration on unlicensed school personnel. School nurses are increasingly responsible for training unlicensed personnel (UAP's) including teachers, principals, support personnel including paraprofessionals and coaches to identify and manage a variety of health related issues.

Following a thorough review of current state statutes, regulation and best practices, guidance documents titled *Recommendations for Protocols for Administration of Emergency Medication* are available on the SDE website.

Conclusion

The Council limits the recommendation for 2018 to:

1. In addition to professional development requirements specified by CGS 10-212-a (10 hours every 2 years), all new Connecticut school nurses should complete 12 hours of education using a curriculum approved by CSDE in collaboration with the Association of

School Nurses (ASNC) and Connecticut Nurses' Association (CNA) within one year of hire. Promoting a standard of education enhances health and educational outcomes for students.

Recognition is given to members of the Council and those who will review this document for their dedication to the health of Connecticut's children.

