

Stepping Stones



Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership Center

*Promoting inclusion and access
in education and healthcare*

*Empowering families and
young adults across PA*

Nursing & Medication Administration

School Nurses



Certified school nurses address a wide range of needs. The school nurse is responsible for maintaining medical records, reporting contagious diseases, and providing health screening and training. Every district is required to have 1 nurse for every 1,500 students. However, their responsibilities vary among districts. Nurses may travel between buildings, and substitute nurses may not be available. If your child receives ongoing nursing services from the school nurse, frequent communication is essential.

The school nurse is responsible for the health care needs of children with special health care needs, providing specialty care, administering medications, and implementing individual health care plans. The school nurse may need to address specific situations, such as an asthma attack or seizure; to complete scheduled procedures or administer medications.

School nurses participate on 504, IEP, and Student Assistance Program (SAP) teams. They also coordinate with the providers of medically necessary “outside” nursing services.

If a child needs to have medication during the school day, families should be familiar with district medication administration policy. Ask the nurse or principal about any questions related to your child’s needs. If they indicate that regulations or policies prohibit your child from receiving medications, ask that they share the documentation.

Considerations for families to consider regarding school nurses:

1. How long is the nurse’s response time to reach your child?
2. Is a nurse in the building during extra-curricular activities?
3. What is the emergency procedure and response time during transportation to and from school?
4. How does your child get needed support during lock-downs and drills?
5. What is the back-up plan?

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If you are the parent or caretaker of a child with disabilities or special health care needs, the PEAL Center has other Stepping Stones issues that may be helpful to you on such topics as Individual Health Care Plans, Health Issues and Instructional Options, Truancy and Attendance, and more.

Agency Nursing Services at School

Some students require individualized services of an Registered Nurse, Licensed Practical Nurse, or nurse's aide at school. These nursing services, provided by a home health care agency, must be approved by medical insurance.

The responsibilities of agency nursing providers vary and are based on physician's orders and in accordance with the agency's plan of care.

Depending upon the physician's orders, agency nursing staff may provide:

- door-to-door care (i.e., travel to and from school with the student)
- part- or full-time care during the school day
- support at extra-curricular and/or field trips.

Agency nursing staff work in cooperation with the school staff, primarily the certified school nurse and student's teacher(s).

Schools can host a meeting with the family, agency nursing staff and school staff to address conflicts and resolve issues. Open lines of communication and focus on meeting the student's needs should be priorities.

The availability and skill set of substitutes can be a concern and should be part of a plan.

If schools will not accept an outside provider, contract with a specific agency, or no provider is available, they have the obligation to provide nursing for a student for whom it is medically necessary. These needs should be addressed in the 504 or IEP, whether an outside provider is used or not.



Resources

IDEIA and Section 504 Teams - The School Nurse as an Essential Team Member (Position Statement).

National Association of School Nurses

<https://bit.ly/3e5NKrD>

The Role of the School Nurse in the Special Education Process. School Nursing 101

<https://bit.ly/2ZA1oya>

School Health and Nursing Services for Students with Disabilities in the Public School Setting.

McAndrews Law (Pennsylvania)

<https://bit.ly/3gwOWpV>

Model Policy for the Management of Students Requiring a Private Duty Nurse in Schools.

Maryland State Department of Education

<https://bit.ly/2YYFUMn>

1:1 Nursing Services for Students with Special Health Care Needs. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

<https://bit.ly/38vRfqj>

The Medically Fragile Child. Caring for Children with Special Healthcare Needs in the School Setting. American Federation of Teachers (AFT)

<https://bit.ly/30antVC>



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