

Stepping Stones



Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership Center

Promoting inclusion and access
in education and healthcare

Empowering families and
young adults across PA

A Mom's Story

Ashley Manthey of Dauphin County has two sons with hydrocephalus, a chronic condition in which fluid creates pressure on the brain. Both boys have shunts to relieve the pressure.

If a shunt fails, however, brain damage or even death could result. **For Ashley and her family, it is critical that school personnel recognize the symptoms of shunt failure and know what action to take.**

Without Individual Health Care Plans in place for her boys, Ashley notes that she *"would not have the peace of mind to let them walk into school each day, away from my watchful eye."*

Read more of Ashley's story in *Why your child needs an IHP* in the Central Penn Parent @ <https://bit.ly/3dkSjy0>.

If a student needs an Action Plan to address emergencies related to Asthma, Seizure, Anaphylaxis and/or Diabetes, these plans are usually written by the physician and shared with the school.

What is an Individual Healthcare Plan?

An Individual Healthcare Plan (IHP, IHCP or HCP) is **a tool developed by a school nurse in cooperation with the student/family to address the needs and goals of a student with medical complexity.** This plan identifies the student's condition(s)/problems and helps school staff be aware of the health care needs of the student while in school, specifying what must be done and by whom. IHPs provide a proactive framework for school staff to understand a student's medical issues, how those issues impact their school experience, and how to deal with related emergency situations.



An Individual Healthcare Plan for school should include:

- A list of individuals who need to understand the plan to ensure the student's safety
- A description that is understandable to non-medical staff:
 - signs, symptoms, and triggers to be aware of
 - a plan of action for when the condition impacts the child
- Training that is needed for staff and/or students
- Information specific to extracurricular activities, transportation, and field trips, if needed
- An Emergency Plan if the student has a life-threatening condition
- Criteria for calling 911 or other first responders
- Criteria and process for contacting the family

An IHP may also address:

- Avoidance of allergens and triggers
- Reasonable accommodations
- Procedures for student to carry medications and self-medicate
- Attendance and/or transportation concerns
- Administration of emergency medications

Healthcare plans are generally kept in the nurse's office and can be embedded in or attached to an IEP or 504 plan.

It is a good idea to discuss the IHP with your child's doctor to be sure that it is accurate and consistent with best practices. An Alternative Attendance Plan may be included in the IEP/504 if a health condition is expected to result in excessive absences. This type of plan may require a letter from a doctor.

Regular communication with the school nurse who is responsible to coordinate the health care needs of students while in the school is important, not only to develop a trusting relationship, but also to address changing needs and update plans. It is important to **share information from healthcare providers, respond to the nurse's requests for supplies, medications, prescriptions, or information** in the cooperative effort to see that your child's healthcare needs are met.

Creating an IHP

Family should:

- Discuss health issues and how they affect your child at school with healthcare provider(s).
- Ask provider(s) to document health issues, needs and specific recommendations.
- Share and discuss documentation from health care provider(s) with the school nurse.

School Nurse should:

- Use assessment tools to gather more information about your child; consult with healthcare provider(s); review medical records; and talk with the student and school personnel.
- Develop a nursing diagnosis that outlines nursing interventions and measurable outcomes for the school setting.
- Establish measurable goals to monitor progress of problem resolution, improved health status, and/or continued maintenance of good health.

IHP EXAMPLE*

Nursing Diagnosis	Goals	Nursing Interventions	Expected Outcomes
Alteration in communication due to tracheostomy	Student has increased independent communication skills	>In-service training to promote effective communication >Staff should stand in front of student, use eye contact and good volume.	Student will increase communication by one verbal or nonverbal cue weekly.



*Cynthia K. Silkworth, Jartha J. Arnold, Judith F. Harrigan, Donna Shipley Zaiger, eds., Individualized Healthcare Plans for the School Nurse, Concepts, Framework, Issues, and Applications for School Nursing Practice. (PDF version of document downloaded 21 June 2020 from <https://www.schoolhealth.com>).



Resources

- **Individualized Healthcare Plans for the School Nurse**
Concepts, Framework, Issues, and Applications for School Nursing Practice <https://bit.ly/2CwmXbf>
This abstracted publication, written for school nurses but also informative for families, provides a thorough description of the IHP process and students with chronic health conditions.
- **Top Ten Tips for Individual Healthcare Plan (IHP)**
PTI Nebraska <https://bit.ly/3hON11i>
Tips to help families to get started on the IHP process.
- **Individual Healthcare Plan Process**
Colorado Department of Education <https://bit.ly/3fHYVYW>
A more detailed discussion of the IHP process.
- **Individual Student Healthcare Plan Templates**
San Diego County Office of Education <https://bit.ly/2WHnoq7>
Downloadable Word documents for over 90 medical conditions that can be customized. Includes plans for students with Autism, Anaphylaxis, Cerebral Palsy, & Hemophilia, Traumatic Brain Injury, & more.
- **Plans of Care for Students with Special Health Care Needs**
Pennsylvania Department of Health <https://bit.ly/319Zl6a>
A brief discussion of specific plans to support students, such as Individualized Healthcare Plans (IHP), Emergency Care Plans (ECP), Individualized Education Program with medical component (IEP), Individualized Transportation Plan (ITP), and 504 Service Agreement.

The PA Family to Family Health Information Center is a program of the Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership (PEAL) Center funded by the Health Resources Services Administration Maternal and Child Health Bureau under Grant H84MC26214.



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