




Studies have proven that students in schools that have a school nurse perform better academically. It is obvious that for the physical, emotional and academic well-being of children, a school nurse makes a difference. Unfortunately, too many schools share a nurse with one or more other schools. Other schools don't have access to a school nurse at all.

It is the responsibility of every one of us to be sure that there is a school nurse in every school.

- Contact your local school district and ask if the children in your community have access to a full-time school nurse at all times. If not, ask why not.
- Contact your state legislators and your members of Congress. Let them know that every child needs a school nurse.

After all, our future is in their hands.


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every child NEEDS
A SCHOOL NURSE

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School nurses today carry out a variety of roles in providing healthcare to our nation's children. We are often the only healthcare professionals that a child will see in a non-emergency situation and gatekeepers for entire families to a healthcare system that is complex and sometimes unmanageable. We must be knowledgeable in insurance reimbursement and Medicaid and other government programs for low-income or special needs children.

School nurses are the watchful eyes and ears of the nation's children during the many hours that they are in schools. More and more children with special healthcare needs and illnesses are now mainstreamed into schools. In fact, of the 52 million students in our nation's schools, 10-20 percent have chronic social, emotional or other health problems. It is our responsibility to develop, implement and monitor care plans for these students.

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The Typical Day of a School Nurse

Few people realize what a school nurse does on a daily basis. Gone are the days of the school nurse who simply responded to students' complaints of tummy aches or bumps and bruises.

We are on the front lines of identifying child abuse, illegal drug use and depression. We insert catheters, gauge pacemakers and monitor blood sugar counts. We do tube feedings, monitor ventilators, console children who come from broken families and counsel girls who think they could be pregnant or have a sexually transmitted disease. We administer prescription medications to almost 3 million students every single day.

We screen for vision and hearing impairments and provide assessments and referrals for health problems and behaviors. We control communicable diseases by ensuring that your children and their classmates are immunized in accordance with state laws and recommendations. We are the first responders in the event of a tragedy



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COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEXANDRA BUXBAUM
ABOVE PHOTOGRAPH BY LAURIE BECK TARVER

or a medical emergency, which may include violent offenders. We give physical exams and, in our spare time, we teach classes on health and nutrition!

In the evenings, when most people believe our workdays have ended, we complete the mounds of paperwork that are required of school nurses who see students. We attend conferences and school meetings and sometimes make home visits.

And we do all of this while under constant pressure to do more with less—fewer resources and fewer school nurses.

Too Few School Nurses

In the United States, there are approximately 45,000 employed school nurses—nowhere near enough to properly provide the care required of them by the nation's 52 million students. Government agencies and professional associations agree that no school nurse should be responsible for more than 750 students. Yet, there are only enough school

nurses currently employed to provide a ratio of one school nurse for every 1,155 students. Unfortunately, some of us have several times that many students to provide care for.

Some of us are responsible for several schools—often at great distances from each other. Some students have only a part-time school nurse or no school nurse assigned to their school at all! In fact, almost half of all school nurses are responsible for students attending at least three different schools.

What happens to those children who don't have access to a school nurse? Children who become ill or injured while in school are often sent home, forcing them to miss out on learning opportunities. For more serious cases, an ambulance is summoned and the child is taken to the emergency room—even if the problem is not a true emergency. Students at risk for pregnancy, suicide, substance abuse and other problems often fall through the cracks.



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PHOTOGRAPH BY BRUCE GILBERT

Our Children at Risk

A record 5.6 percent of all students receive prescription medications while at school. Where there isn't a nurse, the duties of administering these medications and monitoring the children afterward often fall to school personnel ill-equipped to perform these tasks. School secretaries, teachers aides, even coaches have been put in this position. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that in 39 percent of schools nationwide, someone other than an RN administered students' medications.

And we know that's dangerous.

A recent study showed that medication errors in schools were far more likely to occur when someone other than a school nurse was involved.



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PHOTOGRAPH BY BRUCE GILBERT

HELP PUT A SCHOOL NURSE IN EVERY SCHOOL

■ Contact your school superintendent and ask if every child in the school system has access to a full-time nurse at all times. If not, ask why.

■ Contact your mayor, your county council, your state legislators and your members of Congress. Let them know every child needs a school nurse.

■ Log onto our Web site: www.schoolrn.org

for the most current information on the campaign to ensure every child has access to a school nurse.



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