

School-Sponsored Trips, Role of the School Nurse



Position Statement

National
Association of
School Nurses

SUMMARY

It is the position of the National Association of School Nurses, that the registered professional school nurse (hereinafter referred to as school nurse) is in a unique position to support students so that their individual healthcare needs are met both at school and on school-sponsored trips. The school nurse has the nursing background to appropriately assess the proposed school-sponsored trip to determine the accommodations needed to allow all students to safely participate in activities. All students, including students with special healthcare needs, have the right to participate in school-sponsored trips (also referred to as field trips). School nurses must serve a role in the planning and coordination for all school-sponsored trips, including those off-campus, so that all students with healthcare needs remain healthy and safe. This planning process includes making accommodations for health care needs, determining required medications and treatments, and preparing for potential emergencies.

BACKGROUND

Schools offer school-sponsored trips to enhance the educational experience for students or to reward class accomplishments. A trip may be as simple as a local excursion for just a few hours or as complicated as a trip for several days/nights to a different city, state or country. While schools may invite parents/guardians of the student with healthcare needs to accompany the student on the trip, school officials cannot mandate that they attend.

Three federal laws provide important protection to students with disabilities. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the American Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) are civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), reauthorized in 2004, mandates a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment for those students who qualify for special education services (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). All schools that receive federal monies are subject to follow Section 504 and the ADA Act (Gibbons, Lehr, & Selekman, 2013). Many states have additional laws that provide supplementary protections for students.

Estimates indicate that in the United States, 26.6% of children have special healthcare needs (Van Cleave, Gortmaker, & Perrin, 2010). Of these children, 86% receive prescribed medication, 52% require specialty medical care, 33% require vision care, 25% require mental health services, 23% require specialty therapies and 11% require the use of medical equipment (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008).

"The level of nursing or healthcare services required for a student in the classroom is, at a minimum, the same level of care that the student requires during school programs outside of the classroom" (Hootman, Schwab, Gelfman, Gregory, & Pohlman, 2005, p. 223). As the number of students with specialized healthcare needs increases, it is critical that all school systems develop policies to address the provision of safe and competent health services for students while they are away from school buildings for school-sponsored trips (Kentucky Department of Education, 2012).

RATIONALE


A system should be in place to engage the school nurse in all planning phases of the school-sponsored trip to ensure that all necessary accommodations are in place. Currently, the costs associated with providing these accommodations are the responsibility of the school district and must be considered in the initial planning phases of a proposed school-sponsored trip (Foley, 2013). The school nurse should perform an individual health assessment and develop the IHP at the beginning of the school year to appropriately plan safe care for students

with medical needs throughout the school year, including the potential for off-campus school-sponsored trips. The student's healthcare needs on field trips are determined through a collaborative process coordinated by the school nurse, reviewed annually and include a nursing assessment, the healthcare provider orders and information provided by the family (Moses, Gilcrest, & Schwab, 2005). The IHP outlines the plan for meeting the healthcare needs of the student at school and during school-sponsored trips, and is utilized to create emergency care plans (ECP). Behrmann (2010) states "although children with food allergy have a serious medical condition, their allergy should not result in their exclusion from events, such as field trips" (p. 186). This is true for all students with health needs.

The school nurse's knowledge about the individual needs of the students place him/her in a unique position to coordinate care that enables the student to fully participate in a safe and healthy school-sponsored trip experience. Planning steps may include:

- Assessing the transportation method, determining the food that will be served, the staff whom will be present, the layout of the planned visitation site, duration of the trip, and proximity to emergency medical care.
- Addressing medication, medical treatments and procedures required during the trip, as well as the potential for health emergencies.

If allowed by state law, including applicable state nurse practice acts, and district policy/procedures, the school nurse may consider delegating some tasks to a non-nurse, school staff member such as a teacher, utilizing the American Nurses Association's *Principles for Delegation by Registered Nurses to Unlicensed Assistive Personnel (UAP)*, which includes a nursing decision tree (ANA, 2012). If the school nurse who is familiar with the student's health condition and treatment determines that medical care cannot legally or safely be delegated, a school nurse may need to accompany the student (Prennl, 2009), and an additional school nurse may need to cover the school health office.



If the school-sponsored trip takes place in a different state or country, plans must be in place to meet the nursing license and practice laws of that state or country. The Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) allows nurses to have one multistate license, with the ability to practice in both their home state and other party states. A nurse who holds a license issued by a state that is not a member of the NLC has a single-state license that is only valid in that state. They must request and receive permission from the respective state's board of nursing, to practice in another state (NCSBN, 2012). Even if a trip is in a compact state, the nurse must still know the nursing laws/regulations of that state and practice accordingly, regardless of whether she/he is delegating tasks to a non-nurse school staff member or actually attending the school-sponsored trips and performing the necessary health services (NCSBN, 2011). If the nurse is traveling to another country, the nurse must consult with the consulate of the visiting country for permission to practice nursing (K. Erwin, personal communication, 3/14/13).

CONCLUSION

School-sponsored trips can be some of the most memorable experiences for students. Administrators, school staff, families and students must work closely with the school nurse to so that the healthcare needs and safety of all students are provided for during school-sponsored trips. As more children with specialized healthcare needs enter the school system, the role of the school nurse becomes even more critical in assuring the rights, safety and educational experiences of all students.

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All position statements from the National Association of School Nurses will automatically expire five years after publication unless reaffirmed, revised, or retired at or before that time.

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FALL RIVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PROCEDURE FOR FIELD TRIP APPROVAL

Definition of field trip: Anytime a student leaves the school building and/or grounds to participate in any type of activity, whether local or out of state, on foot or by bus.

1. **Teacher:** completes section A and B, attaches a student roster, and then submits forms to the Principal at least 2 weeks prior to potential date of field trip.
2. **Principal:** reviews section A and B and approves or denies the request by completing Section C. If approved, the form is sent to the school nurse.
3. **School Nurse:** reviews sections A and B along with the attached roster for any pertinent student health information. She completes section D. If approved and a nurse does not need to attend, the form is returned to the principal. If the nurse has concerns (ie. health/safety reasons) about approving the trip OR a nurse is needed to attend, she forwards the request to the Nursing Supervisor.
4. **Nursing Supervisor:** reviews the request, checks for nursing availability, and either approves or denies the trip.
5. Form is then returned to the school nurse and forwarded to the Principal.

*****School Committee approval is required for all out of state field trips. *****

Name of Staff Member Requesting Permission _____ Date _____

School _____ Grade _____ Subject _____

A. Type of request: Check appropriate area

___ Field Trip: In-state ___ Field Trip: Out-of-state* ___ Field Day

**School Committee approval is required.*

B. Trip Information:

1. Date of Trip/Field Day: _____

2. Location: _____

3. Transportation: Walking Tour _____ Bus _____ Train _____

4. Departure/arrival information:

Time of departure from school _____ Time of arrival at destination _____

Time of departure from destination _____ Time of return to school _____

5. Number of students (student roster must be attached) _____

6. Number of chaperones. _____

7. Names of teachers and chaperones. _____

8. Provision for meals: _____ Where will you eat lunch? _____

9. Cafeteria notification date: _____

C. Principal:

____ Approved ____ Denied _____
Signature Date

D. School Nurse:

Special Medical Requirements _____

____ *****A nurse needs to attend** ____ *****Concerns: cannot approve**

____ Approved ____ A nurse does NOT need to attend

School Nurse Signature Date

(School nurses are not able to grant approval for field trips that take place after school hours/or weekends)

E. Nursing Supervisor

***** Only if a nurse needs to attend or has concerns before approving.**

____ Approved ____ Denied

Signature Date