

Essential School Health Services for Students with Chronic Conditions

One in ten Alaska children has a health condition, such as asthma, diabetes, or epilepsy, that keeps them home from school at least 11 days each school year.* School health services help these students remain in the classroom, improving their academic success and increasing their chances of graduating on time.

This document outlines the recommended health services for students with chronic health conditions. It also lists resources intended to ease implementation of these recommendations, which also align with the health services goals described in Alaska's *School Health and Safety Framework*.†

Recommendations for School Districts:

- Develop a comprehensive plan for managing the health and safety of students with chronic health conditions.
 - Each school should have identified school personnel who can lead coordination of health services.

Registered professional school nurses are the most qualified personnel to provide health services for all students. If a nurse cannot be assigned to each school, a district nurse can provide oversight for student health needs. Nurses may be district employees, contractors or work in schools via a memorandum of agreement with a local clinic or hospital. Health assistants (unlicensed assistive personnel) may provide some health services, but should work under the supervision of a licensed health care professional. Although public health nurses may offer expertise and provide some school health services (such as TB screening), their capacity to provide planning and staff training for individual student health needs is limited. At minimum, each school should have at least one school staff person, and one substitute, assigned to address individual student health care needs.

- Consult with local resources (i.e., public health centers, community health clinics, hospitals, tribal health organizations), as needed, when developing the plan.
- Adopt proven policies, protocols, and standardized health plans and forms for schools to use to plan care for students with chronic health conditions and other special health care needs.
- Follow the Alaska Board of Nursing regulations and the Medication Administration Delegation Decision Tree‡ to assure safe, legal practice when adopting medication administration policies.

* Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health: CHSCN age 5-17 years with 11 or more school absences due to illness: <http://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/survey/results?q=1622&r=3&r2=1> (obtained 5/29/13)

† Alaska Department of Education & Early Development. *Alaska School Health and Safety Framework*. September 2011. Available at: https://eed.alaska.gov/tls/schoolhealth/pdf/ak_health_safety_plan.pdf (obtained 5/30/13)

‡ http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/wcfh/Documents/school/assets/MedAdmin_Delegation_guide.pdf

Recommendations for Schools:

- Assign and train school personnel to attend to individual student health care needs. Their responsibilities should include:
 - Systematically collecting student health information at registration to identify students with chronic health conditions or special health care needs. Reviewing and updating information annually.
 - Working with parents and health care providers to assure that individualized healthcare or action plans are developed for each student with a chronic condition. These plans should also address disasters/emergencies. These plans require regular review and revision, as needed, throughout the school year.
 - Assuring appropriate medical and parental authorization forms are on file.
 - Administering and storing medications safely.
 - Communicating necessary information to other staff members so they can respond to emergent, individual health care needs.
 - Monitoring absenteeism and responding accordingly to improve school attendance.
- Arrange appropriate training for staff who are responsible for overseeing health care needs of students at school, such as first aid/CPR. Other trainings might include medication administration, bloodborne pathogens, preparation to provide a specific health care procedure, or professional development opportunities. Identify local resources that can support the needed training.
- Offer general staff education about the health conditions of students who attend your schools, again, taking advantage of community and online resources for appropriate training opportunities.
- At least annually, conduct a comprehensive, school-wide review of school practices and procedures to identify and address health hazards, including potential infectious disease agents, environmental safety concerns, and gaps in services that may exacerbate student health conditions.

In addition, these school health services are recommended for ALL students:

- Prevent and control communicable disease and other health problems:
 - Monitor trends related to student health issues such as absenteeism and youth risk behaviors,
 - Monitor and promote immunizations, and
 - Provide environmental and infection control measures to prevent and decrease transmission of communicable conditions.
- Provide appropriate care for illness or injury, including emergencies and disasters/crises:
 - Assure provision of appropriate first aid and triage for physical and mental health issues.
- Ensure that screenings and health examinations occur:
 - Provide state-mandated vision, hearing and tuberculosis screenings,
 - Assure compliance with the school entry physical examinations requirement, and
 - Provide other mental or physical health screenings as determined by local school and community need.
- Assist families in obtaining resources:
 - Provide referrals to address student barriers to learning, and
 - Foster appropriate use of primary healthcare services.
- Provide educational and counseling opportunities to promote and maintain individual, family, and community health:
 - Assess student risks and protective factors; address risks with interventions and education.

Tools and Assistance for Implementing the Recommendations:[§]

- Background information for school administrators
 - *Federal and State Laws* (a brief handout)
 - *Health resources for school districts* (an electronic map, under development, indicating resources in your community)
 - *Staff roles* (descriptions of staff roles appropriate for your school or school district)
 - *Resources to Support School Health Services* (an overview of funding and partnership possibilities)
- Staff training materials
 - Introductions to specific chronic conditions and their implications for the school setting for general school staff
 - Skill development training for school personnel assigned to attend to individual healthcare needs
- State Guidelines
 - Health screening guidelines
 - Medication administration delegation guidelines
 - Disaster Preparedness guidelines for school health services
 - Infectious Disease guidelines
- Forms
 - Health information forms
 - Medication management forms
 - Individualized healthcare plans, action plans, and emergency action plans – generic and for students with asthma, allergy/anaphylaxis, diabetes or seizure
- Additional training and support resources for helping students with specific chronic conditions

[§] Posted on the Division of Public Health website at: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/wcfh/Pages/school/default.aspx>

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