

SCHOOL HEALTH

Betty Sue Hinkson RN, School Nurse

CAN YOU AFFORD NOT TO HAVE A SCHOOL NURSE?

What is going on in schools that require a school nurse?

- We have an increase in medically fragile students
- There are many technology dependant students in the school system
- Many students require medication administration during school hours
- We have an increase in chronically ill students.

Between 1990 and 1999 there was a 198% increase in the number of children at Primary Children's Medical Center who were newly diagnosed with diabetes. The 2000 Utah Child Health Survey estimates that there are 1,800 Utah children who have diabetes. There were 214 children newly diagnosed with diabetes in 2003.

The 2001 Utah Health Status Survey estimated that about 36,000 children (age 0-17 years) living in Utah have asthma. It is the most common chronic childhood disease.

School Nurses are doing more than just handing out band-aids.

School Nurses:

- Prepare Health Care Plans
- Health screenings (vision, scoliosis)
- Manage medication administration
- Supervise medical procedures (tube feeding, catheterization, etc.)
- Management of communicable disease
- Maturation programs
- Recognition and referral of mental health issues

In 2002-2003 school year, school nurses supervised 206,722 preschool and elementary vision screenings.

School nurses screened and assessed over 38,000 students for communicable diseases. This does not include the thousands of lice checks that were done.

Other school nurse activities in Utah include:

- 62,567 scoliosis screenings, with 1,857 referred for treatment
- 33,400 family health consultations
- taught 4,139 health classes
- 4,769 staff awareness programs

For the 2003-2004 school year there were 125 school nurses serving 483,685 school-age children in Utah, which puts the ratio at 1 nurse to 6,022 students. Utah's current goal is 1 to 5000, with the national recommendation at 1 nurse to 750 regular education students.

The National Association of School Nurses (NASN) recommends that the maximum ratio of nurse to students should be one school nurse to **no more than 750 regular education students**. In order to be in line with NASN recommendation, Utah would need approximately 562 more school nurses.

School Nurse Funds

Recently, the school nurse money was put into block grant funds where it now competes with textbooks, athletic programs and other needs of the school districts.

School injuries in Utah

(taken from the Utah Department of Health's Violence and Injury Prevention Program)

- Every hour a student is injured at school
- Every 4 hours a student suffers an injury resulting in a possible fracture
- Every day 911 is called because of a school injury
- Every day a student suffers a possible concussion due to a school injury
- Every 3 days a student loses consciousness as a result of a school injury

So what can we do to ensure the continued presence of school nurses? Contact your legislator, state senator, district personnel, and anyone else that will listen. Our children are our most important resources and deserve to be protected.

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