



Recommended School Health Services Staff Roles

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Background

Like school health services in the rest of the United States, school health in Texas has evolved from a simple system of visiting nurses to a complex network of multifaceted school health programs and full-service school-based health centers.

Texas school nurses have provided many services to local school children in supporting the complex physical and mental health issues that are now being addressed in the school setting. School nurses provided essential information to the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) in detecting varicella outbreaks in children that had previously been immunized. In addition, school nurses play a vital role in providing information about flu and other infectious diseases and reporting outbreaks to DSHS.

With more children entering school with complex medical issues, schools are challenged to match the available resources and the needs of the students in the development of school health services. The Texas Education Code (TEC) §38.012 outlines requirements that school boards are to follow in implementing or expanding school health services. Although there are different models implemented throughout the state, the following guidelines will help in developing a local model that is both reflective of state laws, professional licensing, and best practices in school health service delivery. The different levels of the model are described below.

Medical Advisor/Director

A physician currently licensed by the Texas Board of Medical Examiners that provides contracted or consultative services to the school district through the health services coordinator and/or administrative personnel in matters that impact the areas of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model.

Suggested responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Participates in the establishment of goals and priorities for the school health program.

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- Serves as a member of the district's school health advisory committee, exposure control committee and other health and safety related committees.
- Serves as a subject matter expert to administration regarding policies and administrative regulations on student and employee health, including but not limited to: management of serious physical and mental health problems, communicable disease control, health screenings, environmental hazards, first aid, automated external defibrillator protocols, epinephrine auto-injectors, accident prevention and emergency care;
- Advocates for the school health program and promotes discussion and collaboration with community agencies and organizations, such as medical, dental and other professional health associations, health departments and consumer groups;
- Serves as a consultant to coordinate health services with other district departments such as special education, athletics, physical education, nutrition services and health education;
- Participates in professional growth planning for school nurses and other school personnel as needed;
- Promotes communication between the school district and primary care physicians, medical specialists and health care facilities regarding treatment plans for students;
- Upon request, provides review for outside proposals for health-related activities within the district such as education research and service activities; and
- Develops, reviews, revises and oversees implementation of standing orders required for AEDs, epinephrine auto-injectors, and other health service needs related to district policies and administrative regulations.

School Health Services Coordinator

A licensed healthcare professional (Registered Nurse (RN) or Advanced Practice RN) at the district level that is responsible for the management and coordination of all school health service policies, administrative regulations, activities and resources, including program administration, implementation and evaluation. The healthcare professional should have experience in school health, community health, pediatric/adolescent health care, and/or nursing administration.

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Suggested responsibilities include:

- Coordinates implementation of state mandates related to school health services including, but not limited to: CPR/AED, screenings, immunizations, Type 2 Diabetes Screening (if applicable) and other state laws, rules and regulations;
- Identifies, analyzes and applies current nursing and medical research findings to plan and provide health care delivery for all students;
- Determines the goals and priorities of the health services program in conjunction with nursing and other staff, within the goals and strategic plan established by the district;
- Establishes the organization and determines the priority for allocation of resources to achieve the school health services program goals;
- Develops programs and recommends policies and administrative regulations related to health and safety and provides expert advice to district administration and other departments regarding policies, administrative regulations, nursing and healthcare standards on matters impacting students, staff and the community;
- Collaborates with district level administrators to integrate and implement health policies, and practices with the priorities of the district;
- Coordinates departmental and district staff development, orientation, training, and certification as related to the health needs of students;
- Is a permanent member of the district's school health advisory council;
- Communicates with parents and community in areas concerning student health and safety, acting as the district liaison to parents in health matters;
- Serves as a member of the local school health advisory council, and other district committees related to health and safety issues of students and staff, such as crisis intervention planning teams, staff wellness programs, and exposure control committees;
- Prepares and monitors department budgets to include projected needs and secures funding for special projects to accomplish the goals of the health services program in a cost-effective manner;
- Assists with hiring appropriate district and campus-level staff through establishing criteria for education and experience, as well as departmental and campus staffing needs;

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- Networks with internal and external stakeholders, and represents the district in discussion and collaborative programs relates to student and staff health issues;
- Conducts performance appraisals of school health staff, especially clinical performance;
- Assesses, improves, and evaluates school health priorities and practices for the district; and
- Serves as the district’s media spokesperson on health-related issues.

School Nurse (RN)

A registered nurse (RN) licensed by the Texas Board of Nursing, at the campus level that provides nursing and health services that meet the needs of the students (and staff) on a school campus(es); and/or supervises and trains other staff to provide health services. The school nurse is responsible for implementing the district school health services program in a way that is best suited to the population of the campus (es). According to the National Association of School Nurses, the school nurse facilitates positive student responses to normal development; promotes health and safety; intervenes with actual and potential health problems; provides case management; and actively collaborates with others to build student and family capacity for adaptation, self-management, self-advocacy and learning. (NASN, 2011).

Suggested responsibilities include:

- Collaborates closely with the campus principal, school counselor, teachers, parents, food service staff, and other staff to provide leadership and ensure a healthy school environment. Assists in meeting the health needs of the general school population and those students identified with specific health conditions;
- Provides direct care utilizing professional assessment skills, the nursing process, individualized healthcare plans and established school health policies, procedures and protocols;
- Initiates and maintains accurate student health records, immunization records, medication administration records, individual student treatment plans, and individualized healthcare plan utilizing confidential methods;
- Establishes effective procedures for carrying out mandatory screening programs and submitting required reports;
- Communicates with parents regarding individual students and serves as a liaison between school personnel, the family, health care

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professionals, and the community, to ensure appropriate referral and follow up for student health needs;

- Contributes to the campus communications to parents and the local community regarding health issues;
- Attends Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) meetings of students with identified health needs, and develops the IHP;
- Develops and implements IHPs and evaluates outcomes of skilled and direct nursing care and procedures for medically fragile students, thus integrating the medically fragile student safely into the school environment;
- Collaborates with district personnel, including school psychologist/special education diagnostician regarding implementation of health-related Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and services;
- Educates faculty and staff as needed on health-related topics;
- Develops and recommends campus policies and procedures to promote the health and wellness of students and staff;
- Provides consultation to campus administration in crisis/emergency situations;
- Participates in staff development as outlined in the Texas Nurse Practice Act to maintain professional nursing skills and knowledge including but not limited to: Basic Life Support for Healthcare providers (CPR/AED), certification in mandated screenings and continuing education as required by the Texas Board of Nursing; and
- Supervises, trains and evaluates LVNs, unlicensed diabetes care assistants, other unlicensed assistive personnel, or other school health personnel as designated by the campus principal to have responsibility for assisting students with health needs.

Definition of a school nurse based on Texas Administrative Code Education Commissioner's Rules – Texas Administrative Code, Section 153, §153.CC.

(D) A school nurse is an educator employed to provide full-time nursing and health care services and who meets the requirements to practice as a registered nurse (RN) pursuant to the Nursing Practice Act and the rules and regulations relating to professional nurse education, licensure, and practice and has been issued a license to practice professional nursing in Texas.

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Vocational Nurse (LVN)

A vocation nurse, licensed by the Texas Board of Nursing, who provides direct services to meet the needs of students (and staff) on a school campus or campuses. The school vocational nurse is responsible for implementing the district health program under the direct clinical supervision of the School Health Coordinator (RN or higher level practitioner) or school nurse/RN, in a way that is best suited to the population of the campus (es). Clinical supervision by an RN, MD, and Advanced Practice-RN, Physician's Assistant, dentist or podiatrist is a required by the Nurse Practice Act.

Suggested responsibilities include:

- Maintains current certifications in CPR, use of the AED, and state mandated screenings;
- Collaborates with the campus principal, school counselor, teachers, parents, nutrition services and other staff under the direction of the supervising RN regarding the health needs of the general population and those students with identified health conditions;
- Provides direct care utilizing school health procedures and protocols and IHPs established by the RN supervisor, and/or medical advisory;
- Maintains accurate and confidential student health records, including immunization records, medication administration records, and individual student treatment records;
- Contributes to and implements the IHPs as established by the RN;
- Carries out mandatory screenings, collects data and submits required reports as directed;
- Communicates with parents regarding individual students as directed by the RN;
- Attends ARD meetings (if RN unable) of students with identified health needs, collaboration with appropriate campus staff and RN regarding implementation of health related IEP items;
- Educates faculty or staff as needed on health-related topics as planned and directed by the RN;
- Communicates regularly with the School Health Coordinator or School Nurse/RN regarding communicable diseases, specific student health needs/concerns, campus and department issues, health and safety hazards and all non-routine matters; and
- When directed by the RN, the LVN provides guidance to unlicensed assistive personnel on health-related tasks.

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Unlicensed Assistive Personnel (UAP)

An unlicensed school staff member who is typically referred to as a Health Aide, Clinic Aide, Instructional Aide or Special Education Aide who carries out limited health-related tasks. This person may have previous experience in health care, be certified by the state as a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA), or Certified Medical Assistant (CMA), have received formal first aids training through the Red Cross or similar program, or may have gone through a campus or district orientation and training related to school health services such as medication administration, or specific health condition training such as diabetes care training. In schools without designated school health staff, the non-licensed staff often fill this role. Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) are considered unlicensed assistive personnel when practicing in a school setting since they are only authorized to practice under a Texas licensed physician.

Suggested responsibilities include;

- Provides basic first aid and care for minor injuries and illness and chronic health conditions according to district policy and regulations/protocols established by the School Nurse/RN or the district medical advisor;
- Administer students' medications under the assignment of the school administrator or delegation of the RN, following district policies and procedures;
- Takes vital signs (temperature, pulse, respiration rate, and blood pressure) and accurately documents, only if trained to do this;
- Communicates findings and student complaints to supervising school health staff for direction;
- Contacts parents of students who need to be picked up from school according to established school health services protocols or as directed by the School Nurse/RN;
- Contacts EMS according to established school health services protocols or as directed by the School Nurse (RN);
- Maintains confidential health records (sorting, filing, reviewing for completeness);
- Assists with the screening programs;
- Sends out routine notices to parents;
- Maintains an efficient and safe clinic including infection control procedures, under the direction of the School Nurse/RN;

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- Communicates regularly with the School Health Coordinator or School Nurse/RN regarding communicable diseases, specific student health needs/concerns, campus and department issues, health and safety hazards and all non-routine matters;
- Orders and maintains health office supplies; and
- Can serve as an unlicensed diabetes care assistant after receiving appropriate training. (See diabetes Care Guidelines) at [Texas Diabetes Care Guide](#).)

References

- 1) [Texas Education Code, Section 38.012.](#)
- 2) [Texas Medical Board.](#)
- 3) [Texas Board of Nursing.](#)
- 4) National Association of School Nurses, [Definition of school nursing.](#) 2017.
- 5) Texas Administrative Code, Title 9, Chapter 153, Section 153.CC. [Texas Administrative Code-Definition of School Nurse](#)

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