

*National Association of State School Nurse Consultants
Position Statement*



Clinical Supervision of School Nurses

POSITION

The National Association of State School Nurse Consultants (NASSNC) recognizes that:

- Nursing is a profession that is governed by specific laws and regulations in each state and requires a unique license to practice;
- The integrity and quality of nursing practice is enhanced when clinical supervision is provided;
- Unlike administrative supervision which focuses on adherence to an agency's personnel policies, clinical supervision is based on knowledge of the laws, regulations, and rules governing nursing practice, nursing practice standards, and nursing performance standards;
- Within nursing, school nursing is a recognized specialty;
- School nursing is a unique, independent practice arena, where the school nurse is often the only health care staff on site;
- School nursing services are essential for the health and well being of the student population in order for them to benefit from educational programs and to maximize availability for learning;
- Both the volume and range of nursing services that must be provided at schools has increased dramatically over the past decade;
- School nurses must be accountable for their own actions;
- School nurses may be in the position of supervising other school personnel who provide health services; and
- School nursing practice is compromised when:
 - Non-nurses conduct school nursing clinical evaluations
 - Non-nurses supervise school nursing clinical practice
 - School administrators and/or school physicians perceive that they are responsible and accountable for school nursing clinical practice.

Therefore NASSNC believes:

1. School nurses have a responsibility to adhere to the administrative and agency personnel policies which may be supervised by a non-nursing administrator.
2. For the safety of students and to assure quality practice, school nurses must only be clinically supervised by a school nurse who is licensed as a registered nurse and who meets any other state required credentials for this supervisory role.
3. Clinical supervision requires the provision of initial direction and periodic inspection of tasks and activities through completion. A clinical supervisor enhances the competencies of novice as well as veteran school nurses for meeting the health needs of students by providing guidance based on the scope and standards of

school nursing practice as outlined by state legislative bodies, the American Nurses Association, and the National Association of School Nurses. To ensure that students are achieving expected health related outcomes, an adequate number of school nurse supervisors must be in place to provide direction and inspection of clinical tasks.

4. The school nurse supervisor must be allowed sufficient time away from direct student service provision in order to fulfill her or his supervisory responsibilities.
5. When setting criteria for the safe and effective clinical supervision of school nursing activities, many factors need to be considered:
 - supervisor competence
 - scope of nursing services based on student needs
 - number of school nurses
 - school setting
6. Because the health and safety of students directly impact educational achievement, the school nurse supervisor must possess a working knowledge of the laws, regulations, rules, and processes that are relevant to school settings and be a member of the school district management team.
7. The school nurse supervisor is responsible for developing her or his management skills through formal education, collaboration, mentors, etc.

RATIONALE

More students with special health care needs are now attending school, subsequently; school districts are challenged with providing a level of nursing services not previously required. School districts must provide sufficient staff and resources to safely meet the needs of students with chronic and/or urgent health care needs. While costs for school nursing personnel remain an issue, safe care for students must be the priority and measures must be in place to safeguard the integrity and quality of the nursing services provided to students and to manage legal risks for the school district. Furthermore, a school nurse supervisor is essential to implementing consistent standards of care across the school district.

As a result, a school nurse holding a current license as a registered nurse, and any other state required credentials, must supervise and evaluate the clinical practice of the school nurse. Notwithstanding any additional requirements that individual state laws may impose, a registered nurse with school experience is the qualified individual for providing the level of supervision and evaluation needed to ensure that quality nursing services are being provided for students. The supervising registered nurse may be called, depending on individual state laws or school district nomenclature, a school nurse manager, school nurse supervisor, school nurse leader, or school nurse coordinator. The school nurse manager/supervisor/leader/coordinator must evaluate the school nurse's clinical practice and provide technical assistance to the school nurse with regards to his/her nursing practice. The school nurse manager/supervisor/leader/coordinator is responsible for hiring, training, supervising, and evaluating the school nurse's clinical practice to ensure that practices are evidenced based and applied according to the laws, regulations, and rules that govern school nursing practice as well as standards established by the American Nurses Association and the National Association of School Nurses.

School administrators are legally responsible for ensuring the safety of all students, including the provision of required nursing services by qualified staff. School administrators have certain responsibilities regarding the educational placement of students but they cannot legally be responsible for deciding the clinical competency of school nurses. Administrative supervision, provided by the building or district administrator, includes such activities as adherence to school policy and state and federal regulations, and the day-to-day non-clinical duties performed by the school nurse. However, this does not include supervision regarding scope of nursing practice issues and solutions.

DEFINITIONS

Clinical Supervision in School Nursing Practice: Clinical supervision is a term used to describe a formal process of professional support and learning, which enables individual school nurses to develop knowledge and competence, assume responsibility for their own practice and enhance client protection, school nursing practice, and the safety or care in complex clinical situations. This clinical supervision is a practice-focused professional relationship involving a practitioner reflecting on practice, guided by a skilled nursing supervisor (adapted from Kirk, Auth, Eaton, 2000 and Lyth 2000).

School Nursing Practice: A specialized practice of professional nursing that advances the well-being, academic success, life-long achievement and health of students. To that end, school nurses facilitate positive student responses to normal development; promote health and safety; intervene with actual and potential health problems; provide case management services; and actively collaborate with others to build student and family capacity for adaptation, self management, self advocacy, and learning (National Association of School Nurses 1999).

SUMMARY

The National Association of State School Nurse Consultants believes that schools have an obligation to ensure the quality and safe provision of school nursing services as necessary for the health and well being of all students. Therefore, school nursing services must be provided by qualified professional nursing personnel and with utmost regard for protecting the student. Clinical school nursing services must be *directly supervised* by a licensed professional (registered nurse) school nurse manager/supervisor/leader/coordinator who meets the state's educational credentials. Adequate numbers of supervisors must be established based on the scope of school nursing services, the number of school nurses and the intensity of services required by students.

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