



## **Medicaid Reimbursement for School Nursing Services**

### **Position**

The National Association of State School Nurse Consultants (NASSNC) believes that school health services should be provided for all students and that Medicaid funds should be used to reimburse schools for the nursing services provided for Medicaid-eligible children. Furthermore, NASSNC believes that school districts should designate and restrict the use of funds received for Medicaid reimbursable nursing services to services provided by a licensed registered nurse (RN) or delegated by the RN to a licensed practical nurse (LPN) or unlicensed assistive personnel (UAP). Such funds should be used to improve school nurse to student ratios and provide essential supports that ensure the quality of school health nursing services for Medicaid eligible children.

### **Rationale**

The demand for school nursing continues to increase as more children with complex medical conditions, chronic diseases and other physical and mental health impairments attend schools, and with assistance, are able to participate more actively in school programs. These children are entitled to attend public school by federal and state statutes relating to the education of children and access rights of persons with disabilities. In addition, the demand for nursing services has increased among the entire population of students. Children who experience abusive home situations, risk-taking adolescents, and students who are ill or injured, all seek help and benefit from early identification and triage by professional school nurses. Reimbursement for school nursing services provided for Medicaid eligible children is clearly warranted to support the broad scope of nursing services that enables these children to attend school and maximize their learning potential. Additionally, from a preventive health perspective, school nurses encourage healthier lifestyles and can help reduce the unnecessary use of medical care by identifying problems early and assisting families to access health care, thus contributing to cost containment.

Despite the increasing demand and documented need staffing inequity continues to be a major problem impacting quality and quantity of services available. Local school districts must rely on a combination of local, state and federal funds, creatively pooling categorical funds to employ school nurses. Medicaid reimbursement can contribute greatly to that pool and is one means of ensuring funding equity for school nursing services in less affluent school communities, if the reimbursement received for services rendered is restricted for nurse staffing.

For quality assurance purposes, reimbursement for school nursing services should be restricted to those direct services provided by licensed registered nurses (RN), or those delegated by them to licensed or unlicensed assistive personnel. Professional nursing practice is both a healing art and a science with a solid base of knowledge and skills that are the basis of the decision making and judgment that nurses use to identify problems and plan interventions. These interventions address and advocate the needs of the whole person, family, and community. They are planned to promote the health and well being of individuals; to identify individuals and groups at risk and intervene to prevent illness; and to support people in their responses to illness.

Reimbursable categories of nursing service should include: case finding, nursing care procedures, care coordination, student health counseling and instruction, emergency care treatment and injury prevention.

### **Definitions**

#### *Medicaid:*

a federal/state funded medical assistance program for low-income families through Title XIX of the Social Security Act. Medicaid pays for periodic preventive health screenings and medically necessary treatments through the Early Periodic Screening, Detection and Treatment (EPSDT) program. Medicaid will also pay for therapeutic treatments and procedures necessary for children with disabling conditions or chronic illness.

#### *Federal Statutes:*

U.S. Constitution: "The Education for all Handicapped Children (PL-49-142) of 1975"; "Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) of 1990 and 1997"; and "The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990", Section 504, of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

#### *School Nurse:*

School nursing is a specialized practice of professional nursing that advances the well being, academic success, and life long achievement 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. (NASN, 1999) Educational preparation: a Registered Nurse (RN), currently licensed by the state. Recommended (or as required by states) Baccalaureate of Science in Nursing and National certification.

*Categories of Nursing Service:*

*case finding:* identification of students with potential health deficits through scheduled preventive health screenings and in the course of assessing needs of students seeking assistance;

*nursing care procedures:* immunizations, medications, medically prescribed nursing procedures, interventions identified in the Individualized Healthcare Plan (IHP);

*care coordination:* outreach to determine eligibility, follow-up on referrals, monitoring current status of student with health impairment(s), assistance with access to medical care and support services;

*health counseling and instruction:* nursing assessment, preventive health counseling and instruction, and anticipatory guidance for an identified or potential health problem or concern;

*emergency management and care:* assessment planning and intervention for potential school emergencies, with preventive follow-up evaluation and planning.

## **Summary**

The National Association of State School Nurse Consultants believes that school nursing services are essential for the health, well being, and rehabilitation of the student population. In addition, school nurses are the key to successful school partnerships with physicians, other community health systems, and families by ensuring early identification of health problems with appropriate and timely access to health care. The Medicaid program charges states with the responsibility for insuring health care for children from uninsured families. Most states currently reimburse school districts for the provision of nursing/health services, physical and occupational therapy, psychological tests, and audiological services for students with disabilities. School nurse services should be included in all state plans.

## **References**

- Brainerd, Elaine, (1998). School Health Nursing Services Progress Review: Report of 1996 National Meeting. *Journal of School Health* January Vol.68, No. 1:12-17.
- National Association of School Nurses, (1996). *The Professional School Nurse Roles and Responsibilities Education, Certification, and Licensure*. Scarborough, ME. National Association of School Nurses, Inc.
- Minnesota Nurses Association (1996). *What is Professional Nursing? Talking Points*. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Nurses Association.

- Stoto, Michael A. (1997). Sharing Responsibility for the Public's Health: A New Perspective from the Institute of Medicine. *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*, 3(5), 22-34.

Approved: August 1993 || Revised: April 2000