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# Supervision of School Health Nurses

By Susan Henry, RN, BSN, Indiana; Dona Roberts, RN, BSN, Indiana;  
Vicki Taliaferro, RN, BSN, NCSN, Michigan; and Cathy Young-Jones, RN, MSN, South Carolina

### Q: Is it appropriate for a school administrator to provide clinical supervision for school nurses?

A: Constant advances in medical technology are placing new demands on local education agencies as more students with special health care needs attend school. Local education agencies must provide a level of school health nursing services previously not required. Competent staff and sufficient resources must be made available to safely meet the needs of students with chronic and/or urgent health care needs. Although costs for school nursing personnel remain an issue, safe care for students must be the priority. In order to ensure student safety and to manage legal risks for local education agencies, measures must be in place to safeguard the integrity and quality of the nursing services provided to students.

Nursing is a profession that requires the completion of a unique course of study and the possession of a license to practice. The laws and regulations contained in each state's Nurse Practice Act direct the practice for the nurse, including the requirement, in some states, that a nurse be supervised by another nurse. School administrators have responsibilities regarding the educational placement of students and are legally responsible for the safety of all students, including the provision of required health services by qualified staff. Administrative supervision over employment issues for school nursing personnel such as dress code, attendance, and punctuality can be managed by a school administrator; however, unless a school administrator is a registered nurse, the administrator does not have the credentials necessary for supervising and determining the competency of a school nurse's clinical practice. These are all reasons to support the recommendation that a registered nurse supervise all clinical aspects of school nursing practice.

Supervision requires the provision of initial direction and periodic inspection of tasks and activities. Nurses providing school health services should be directly supervised by a qualified school nurse supervisor who is a licensed registered nurse and has experience in school nursing practice. To ensure that the health outcomes for students are being met, it is important to have adequate numbers of supervisors. When setting ratios for

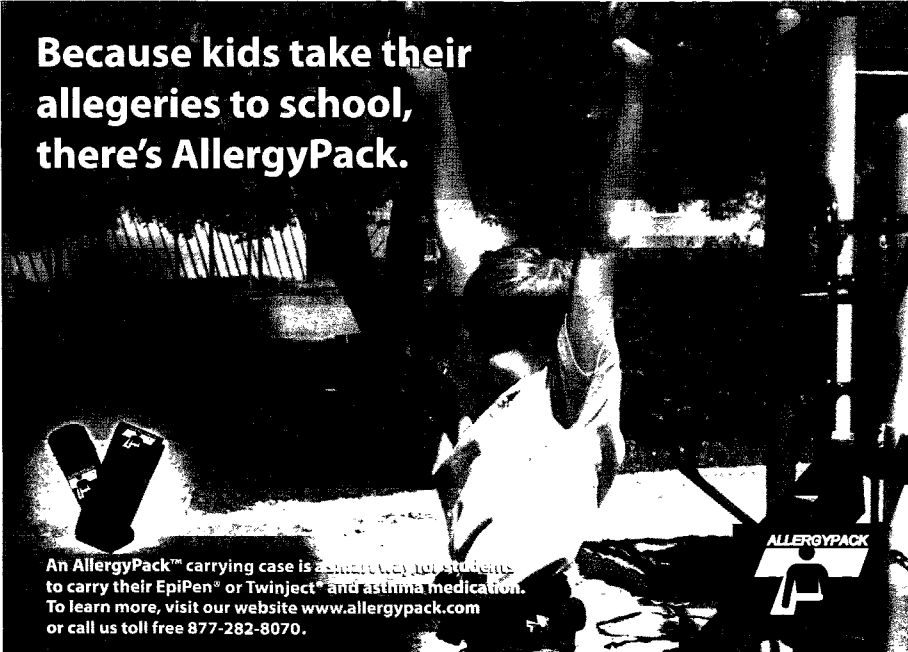
safe and effective supervision of school nursing activities, factors that need to be considered include supervisor competence, the scope of nursing services required (based on the health needs of the students being served), the number of school nurses being supervised, and the type of school setting.

### Summary

Schools are obligated to provide safe and high quality school nursing services to ensure the health and well-being of students. School nursing services should be provided by qualified personnel with the utmost regard for the protection of the student. School nurses should be directly supervised by professional school nurse supervisors who are registered nurses. Adequate numbers of supervisors should be based on the scope of school nursing services required to meet student needs, the number of school nurses being supervised, and the type of school setting.

The National Association of State School Nurse Consultants (NASSNC) has developed a position paper on this issue. The position paper can be found at the NASSNC Website (<http://www.nassnc.org>).

*To discuss school nurse supervision in your state, please contact your State School Nurse Consultant. To locate contact information for your State School Nurse Consultant please visit the NASSNC Website at <http://www.nassnc.org> and click on "About Us" to gain access to a listing of our members.*



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