



Wisconsin School Nurses Practice 21st Century School Nursing during COVID-19

Practicing 21st Century School Nursing (NASN, 2015), Wisconsin School Nurses ([Wis. Stat. § 115.001\[11\]](#)) use the key principles of Community/Public Health, Leadership, Quality Improvement, and Care Coordination as they respond to situations involving SARS-CoV2 (2019 novel coronavirus) and COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019). This document is an overview of activities school nurses might perform while mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on their school communities.

Community/Public Health

School nursing practice is grounded in community/public health and is consistent with the core functions of public health. There are three levels of prevention in public health. In public health interventions are not only individually based, but are directed to an entire (school an/or local) community.

Primary prevention occurs before the health issue is a problem. Secondary prevention occurs when a health issue has begun, but before signs, symptoms, or complications occur. The public health focus in secondary prevention is on risk reduction and disease prevention. After a health issue has occurred, tertiary prevention includes strategies that limit further negative effects from that existing health problem and promote optimal functioning and recovery. School nurses have practiced and will continue to practice all three levels of prevention during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Risk Reduction

- Determine which students are at increased risk of complications or illness when school resumes.
- Write or update school nurse care plans (Individualized Health Plans) and Emergency Action Plans,
- Proactively provide information and resources on other issues that arise in your population. For example, child abuse often rises in times of stress-providing resources and skills to cope during this time will be critical.

Surveillance

- Develop an evidence-based plan and process, based on CDC guidelines and in accordance with local health department recommendations, which will decrease anxiety and inappropriate screenings of children (and staff) upon schools reopening. Communicate and review the process with administration and teachers ahead of time.

Health Education

- Create a school nurse webpage on the school website. NASN has a resource to assist with development. - [Enhancing Your Virtual Footprint: The School Nurse's Professional Health Office Website.](#)
- Keep parents, family and staff up-to-date by proactively pushing information out regarding the illness and how to address related stress and anxiety. This can include information on the disease caused by this novel coronavirus, prevention mechanism, or [myth busting](#) inaccurate information.

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Access to Care and Social Determinants of Health

- Develop a list of resources that families may need during this time such as local food pantries, health centers, etc. Distribute the list to families, as these needs may be new to families and they are unaware of community resources.
- Protect against stigma; avoid and correct language that targets racial/cultural groups.

Leadership

School nurses provide leadership to their school communities and communities at large. During the initial phases of the coronavirus infection school nurses renewed and updated pandemic plans and developed strong connections with local public departments. School nurses demonstrate leadership as the crisis continues. School nurse leadership will be essential when the public health abates and schools make back to school plans.

Policy Development and Implementation

- Review and update policies and procedure manuals – particularly regarding communicable disease outbreak, emergency preparedness, when students should stay home, etc.
- Work with the information technology department to be sure you have access to student attendance rates (and add reasons for absences) for future events, and when schools reopen.

Systems Level Leadership

- Review strategies to protect student (and staff) health information. Review [FERPA and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#).
- Use emerging data to inform updates to health policy in your school community.
- Advocate for safe social distancing practices during school closure essential services activities

Quality Improvement

Quality Improvement mimics the nursing process: assessment, identification of the issue, developing a plan, implementing the plan, and evaluating if the goals/outcomes are achieved. Using the quality improvement process allows school nurses to understand which of their activities have the greatest impact on student health and outcomes and which do not. This knowledge helps school nurses prioritize activities.

Data Collection

- Begin data collection for year-end reports. Consider submitting data to the voluntary Wisconsin School Health Services Survey. Link will be open in May. <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/pupil-services/school-nurse/data>
- Use emerging data to inform updates to health policies in your school community.

Documentation

- Update records. Purge unnecessary records. Identify new and withdrawn students and follow district record keeping protocol. Ensure data entry is complete.
- Review document [FERPA and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- Document activities during school closure.

Evaluation

- Reflect on processes that would have improved communication, efficiency etc. so you are prepared during debriefing and future pandemic planning sessions.

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- Complete self-evaluation of learning needs and pursue continuing nursing education (CNE) hours and other learning opportunities such as professional reading. See #15 School Nurse Update for ideas (https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sspw/pdf/15_DPI_School_Nurse_Update_3.23.20_final_draft.pdf).

Care Coordination

During the school year, care coordination is a primary function of most school nurses. During school closures, school nurses continue to practice care coordination for their students with chronic health conditions, students with IEPs and related services, and students who received medication while at school. In anticipation of schools eventually reopening or starting the next school year, school nurses will implement components of care coordination.

Chronic Disease Management

- Contact parents of students with chronic disease
- Update health care plans-complete intake forms
 - Evaluate effectiveness of health care plans
 - Ensure they have access to health care
 - Offer phone/video teaching-enhance self-care and parent involvement
 - Design ways to support families with a new diagnosis/chronic condition
 - Create a resource list for families

Direct Care

- Coordinate care for students off site, such as ensuring students' school medication supplies can be picked up for use at home.
- Review/update materials to train and delegate care to unlicensed school staff when school resumes next school year.

Interdisciplinary Teams

- Develop online trainings/podcasts for your schools on topics that you receive many questions on (such as why schools track immunizations, why schools have policies and what the policy is regarding medication, school rules regarding communicable disease/staying home from school)
- Prepare information and reports for Special Education and 504 evaluations.

Transition Planning

- Complete and end of year activities that can be done ahead of time.
- Prepare for immunization compliance tracking in fall 2020. Determine when to send out reminders based on local situation.

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References

National Association of School Nurses (NASN). 2015. *Framework for 21st Century School Nursing Practice™*. Available: <https://www.nasn.org/nasn/nasn-resources/professional-topics/framework>

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