

School nurse roles



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An informal survey was conducted among nurses in Illinois for the main purpose of determining the school nurse's different roles in a school setting. However, there were many interesting findings that should be addressed by the health department of Illinois. The survey conducted has a high participation rate since 100% of the respondents answered the survey. Also, the survey has a good quality of respondents since majority of the respondent's educational level (38. 53%) were mostly BSN with either Type 73 or Type 75 certificate. In fact, only 93 (22. 63%) respondents out of 411 were not nurses yet they were in one way or another in the allied health profession. Some were still working on their certification in nursing or have an undergraduate degree in allied health sciences . Also, the survey appears to have drawn a bigger participation rate in smaller districts with 1-4 schools in the district (47. 32 %). The questions were sent through IASN list serv which reached over 625 people.

Upon analyzing the data , it was surprising to learn that out of 409, respondents only 52. 81% of the schools in the district have a Registered Nurse. This is quite disturbing since some schools in the district have enrollment rates as big as 40, 000 students. As previously mentioned, the schools in the smaller districts were even more staffed with RN than those schools belonging to larger districts. Also, most of the school nurses are also responsible for other schools in the same district. Moreover, most of the schools have only 1 RN with no health aide (CNA) to support the nurse. Although some have CNAs to assist them, others have only secretaries or clerks to support the medical staff . Unfortunately, even the assistants work on a part-time basis and perform different roles in the school too

The survey also revealed that smaller districts have even more nurses than

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those of schools in larger districts. Also, the highest number of RNS employed can be found in DuPage valley and the Northeast. In fact, the North district that covers the area of Northwest, Northeast, DuPage, Lakeshore/Calumet, Northlake have the most number of RNs in their schools.

A small percentage of the nurses interviewed also revealed that they were also teaching some subjects like Medical Careers, Health occupation, and Health. In classroom instruction, 51% of topics discussed revolved mainly on hand-washing and germs, 34% on concerns on puberty, 29% on dental issues. This translates to the need for more instructors on health issues which should be given attention by school officials.

There were other important issues that must be addressed as the survey indicated that in most cases where a Nurse is not around, people from the administration themselves administer medication. This means that Principals, Administrators or even Staff administer medication when a health professional is not around. This is alarming since there is a lot of risks involved in this situation. It also comes to a point that some students go on self-medication when there really is no health professional around. To make matters complicated, this is compounded by the fact that 105 respondents replied that their non-medical staff did not receive any Medical Administration Education at all.

Behind all these statistical data from an informal survey, there is an imminent crisis in school districts in Illinois. It seems that healthcare for students is a not a priority of the schools. If the situation would be left alone, we would one day wake-up with a healthcare crisis such as students dying

inside schools due to negligence. This survey is a wake-up call that educators, legislators and health officials must respond to.