

July 2016

ESSA Talking Points for School Nurses

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law December 2015 replacing No Child Left Behind. It up ends the current law transferring the bulk of decision-making from the U.S. Department of Education to state and local education agencies and empowering those who wish to be heard on the state and local levels to influence decision makers.

ESSA directly refers to the school nurses role in Title IV (A) stating: “Chronic Disease Management led by School Nurses” and 25 percent of children have chronic health issues. ESSA specifically recognizes the intersection between health and education. Sick children cannot achieve their academic potential.

ESSA cites “Specialized Instructional Support Personnel” (SISP) multiple times throughout the law and school nurses are defined as SISP. (SISP also include school social workers, school psychologists, school counselors, school speech language pathologists, school librarians and others). Furthermore, the law demands that meaningful consultation take place with parents, teachers, principals, administrators, paraprofessionals, SISP, and community leaders on State, District and Local Plans. SISP reduce barriers to learning and help children achieve their academic potential. As SISP, school nurses are the basic infrastructure for the health of students in school and provide a critical link between student health and learning.

Local Education Agencies can use their Title I dollars (where at least 40 percent of students are from low-income families) **to develop school-wide programs** for all students, including **hiring a school nurse**, as well as nutrition programs, physical education programs, and bullying prevention program.

States are developing their State Accountability Plans through Title I. One of the five indicators is “School Quality and Support” and within that rubric is “School Climate and Safety.” Chronic absenteeism, bullying harassment and prevention, student engagement, and student discipline measures can all be used to leverage “health” and school nursing services through ESSA.

Title I also demands State and Local Report cards delineate nine requirements “(I) measures of school quality, climate, and safety, including rates of in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, school-related arrests, referrals to law enforcement, chronic absenteeism (including both excused and unexcused absences), incidences of violence, including bullying and harassment; ... **These are all indicators that school nurses can make an impact.**

Student health services help support student academic achievement. Adverse health conditions can more disproportionately affect children from underserved communities that attend underperforming schools

Children who live in poverty are at greater risk of having a chronic condition with unmet health needs affecting their ability to learn. Adverse health conditions can lead to an increase in chronic absenteeism. Students who have a chronic health conditions have reduced absences when a student's condition is managed by a school nurse.

School nurses are on the front lines of the battle against chronic absenteeism. Where school nurses are present in schools there are higher rates of attendance, graduation as well as immunization compliance.

School nurses play an important role for students who may be bullied or harassed in addition to recognizing mental health issues. Students may present with physical symptoms that often are related to bullying, harassment, or other mental health issues. The school nurse identifies and intervenes so the student receives services. School nurses support the social, emotional and physical health of students and serve as a safe harbor in school for students.

Title II allows Professional Development money for SISP.

Title IV Part A -- Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants is a large block grant that can be used for health. Specifically, the "Supporting Safe and Healthy Students" program can be used for school based mental health, drug and violence prevention, bullying and harassment prevention, nutrition and physical education, chronic disease management, mentoring, school counseling, asthma management, and professional development for SISP.

Title I schools, slated to receive more than \$30,000, must conduct a "Needs Assessment." For a "Needs Assessment" to take place, "Meaningful Consultation" must occur and school nurses can contribute valuable information about the health of students, school health and school nursing.

Examples for School Nurses

Planning

- Meet with other school nurses to develop talking points so you are delivering the same message.
- Make an appointment with the leaders of the team leading the planning for ESSA in your state and plan to attend with one or two other nurses.
- Plan to attend any information gathering session in your state. Sign up to speak early in the agenda while members are still fresh and make sure you identify yourself as a school nurse.



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- Respond quickly to any request for input including offering feedback on surveys.
- Consider meeting with other SISP groups in your state to present a comprehensive plan
- Work with the National Education Association (NEA) or American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in your state for additional support.

Talking points

- Describe how you can improve seat time for students.
- Describe what school nurses do to keep students in school.
- Describe how you educate staff, preparing plans (EAP, 504 or IEP) to help remove barriers to learning.
- Describe how you work with other SISP in your school community to meet the needs of students.
- Consider introducing the Whole School Whole Community Whole Child model, describing how it can improve overall school climate and safety, addressing the goals mentioned in ESSA.
- Review the resources below to offer specific information for your community.
- Review the advocacy resources in the NASN [Better Health. Better Learning.TM e-Toolkit](#).

Resources for Needs Assessments:

[Whole School Whole Community Whole Child School Improvement Tool](#)

[CDC School Health Index](#)

[National PTA](#)

Other:

[Every Student Succeeds Act](#)