

Student Healthcare Access - A Right and Not A Privilege

Position Brief

SUMMARY

It is the position of the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) that all students should have access to health care. Quality healthcare services are critical for health promotion and prevention, health maintenance, disease prevention and management, and health equity among individuals (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP), n.d.a). Absence of health insurance contributes to lack of access to healthcare, which directly impacts student's ability to learn.

RATIONALE

Healthy People 2030 defined access to health services as “the timely use of personal health services to achieve the best possible health outcomes” (ODPHP, n.d.b). Overall health is fundamental to a student's growth and development. Students with unmet health-related needs have difficulty engaging in the educational process (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2016). Lack of insurance coverage, in addition to family violence, homelessness, lack of preventative healthcare, poor nutrition, poverty, and substance abuse, are all barriers that negatively affect students' health and learning (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018). Geographic, informational and economic limitations must be removed to allow for smooth access to healthcare (Children's Health Fund, 2016). Health literacy and personal understanding of healthcare insurance policies are examples of informational challenges for families. According to the Kaiser Foundation (2018), most uninsured people cite the high cost of health insurance as the primary reason for lack of insurance. Additionally, Kaiser (2018) notes that lack of U.S. residency is also a barrier. Undocumented immigrants qualify for emergency Medicaid only. Permanent immigrants are not eligible, even if they meet program qualifications for Medicaid, until they have been a U.S. resident for 5 years. Refugees and asylees do not have to wait 5 years to qualify for Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) (Kaiser, 2018). Policies to ensure students maintain insurance coverage without gaps can improve access to health care (Leininger & Levy, 2015).

Healthcare access by all students is an essential factor that can improve the overall health and wellness of society. School nurses remove barriers to healthcare access and provide direct care, care coordination and case management to students in need (Maughan, Duff & Wright, 2016). It is the position of NASN that all students have equitable access to healthcare.

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“To optimize student health, safety and learning, it is the position of the National Association of School Nurses that a professional registered school nurse is present in every school all day, every day.”

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