



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

School Nursing During School Closures: Maximizing the Possibilities

Vermont's school nurses (SN) are required to be licensed Registered Nurses (RNs). RNs have endless opportunities to help during local, state, and national disasters and boy are WE GRATEFUL! SNs' daily work in health surveillance, care coordination, and public health nursing every day, all day is just what is needed to help school communities cope with the fast changing COVID-19 situation, especially when schools are closed.

TODAY: School nurses know their student and staff needs and know how to coordinate community resources but the first and most crucial step is for SNs to take care of their own health and that of their family. Practice and teach hand washing, covering coughs, staying home when ill, and teaching others to protect the vulnerable. There are short and long term roles that SNs can take in the school, local, and national community.

TOMORROW: Follow the school or local education agency's (LEA) emergency operations plan. Communicate per that plan. Does the plan need updating to recognize the work of health surveillance and care coordination of students with special health needs and preparing the health office for the return of students? For example, does care coordination ensure that all student medication and healthcare supplies are returned to families who are likely to need them. Delivering or arranging for families to come pick up medications such as those of ADHD and diabetes, or tube feeding supplies to hold families over during the closure are just some ways of helping student and families cope.

- **Policy and procedure updates:** What a fabulous time for district nurses to video conference and do some of these needed updates!
- **Arranging for or coordinating resources** such as school and community food shelves and transportation, library services, or a letter writing campaign of students to the local extended care facility helps isolated persons feel valued and connected. Schools that are the established site for the American Red Cross may have existing systems to support families who have housing or other resource challenges where the SN can link those who need with those who have. Learn what your [local emergency management plan](#) says, found on your municipal website and share the [2-1-1- website](#). Additional opportunities to serve include joining the [Medical Reserve Corp](#) , the [American Red Cross](#), working with the community mental health agency or local faith communities.

THE NEXT DAYS: Longer term SN roles include coordinating the care of students and implementing wellness routines to support emotional healing and mental health recovery. Unforeseen health or social disruptions can change the health status of returning students with special needs so medical orders may need verification or collaboration with the medical home. Advanced nursing judgment may be needed, and RN roles may change during an official declaration of a state of emergency. Knowledge of the [Crisis Standards of Care](#) is important if triage protocols and access to personal protective equipment and emergency resources change. Potential guidance on this standard *may* be coming to VT's SN. Our advocacy role means connecting those who need with resources and seeing the whole student, the whole family, and the whole school community. Find one thing that excites you the most and dig in! But always take care of you.



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The Vermont Department of Health is proud of the tremendous work of VT's high quality School Nursing personnel. Thank you for all you do every day, all day in building the next generation of healthy Vermonters.

COVID-19 Resources: [Vermont Department of Health – COVID-19](#)

- ✚ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
 - [Crisis Standards of Care](#)
 - [Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools](#)
 - [Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19](#)
 - [Stigma and Resilience](#)
- ✚ Coronavirus and Our Mental Health- [VT: Dept. Mental Health](#)
- ✚ COVID-19:
 - [American Nurses Association](#)
 - [National Association of School Nurses](#)
- ✚ FEMA: [Vermont Emergency Management](#)
- ✚ [2-1-1 Systems](#)
- ✚ National Association of School Nurses – Role of the School Nurse
 - [Emergency Preparedness - Position Statement](#) - NASN POSITION
 - Framework for 21st Century School Nursing Practice: [Consider the public and community health role](#)
- ✚ SAMHSA: [Coping With Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks](#)
- ✚ [U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Safe and Supportive Schools. The Role of Districts in Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans, Washington, D.C. 2019.](#)
- ✚ World Health Organization [Resources](#)

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