

Position Statement

SUMMARY

It is the position of the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) that every school-age child should have access to a registered professional school nurse (hereinafter referred to as the school nurse), who has a *minimum* of a baccalaureate degree in nursing from an accredited college or university and is licensed as a registered nurse through a board of nursing. These requirements constitute minimal preparation needed to practice at the entry level of school nursing (American Nurses Association [ANA] & NASN, 2011). Additionally, NASN supports state school nurse certification and endorses national certification of school nurses through the National Board for Certification of School Nurses (NBCSN) (NASN, 2016a).

BACKGROUND

School nursing is a subspecialty of public health nursing, which is incorporated in the curriculum for baccalaureate nursing programs. Baccalaureate nursing education develops competencies in leadership, critical thinking, quality improvement, and systems thinking. It provides graduates with nursing theory and clinical experience and cultivates their ability to translate research into evidence-based nursing practice. Baccalaureate prepared nurses also address and analyze current and emerging healthcare issues, including the need for health policy and healthcare financing (National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice, 2014; Institute of Medicine [IOM], 2010).

To practice as a professional registered nurse, graduates must pass the National Council Licensure Examination for the Registered Nurse (NCLEX-RN) in their state, territory, or country in which the exam is offered. In addition to nursing licensure by a board of nursing, post-baccalaureate education and or certification approved by departments of education may be required to practice school nursing. Licensure protects the public by indicating that a nurse successfully completed an examination that demonstrated a minimal level of competency to practice professional nursing. Certification documents a higher level of competence and expertise in a focused area of practice. Requirements for state certification and the certifying bodies vary by individual state, territory, or county in which a school nurse practices.

In the 1980s, NASN developed a national certification examination and then established the National Board for Certification of School Nurses (NBCSN), which became an independent incorporation in 1991. The purpose was twofold: to promote and recognize quality practice in school nursing and to assure that certification criteria and examinations in school nursing are determined by experts in the specialty practice (NBCSN, 2015).

RATIONALE

"School nursing, a specialized practice of public health nursing, protects and promotes student health, facilitates normal development, and advances academic success. School nurses, grounded in ethical and evidence-based practice, are the leaders that bridge health care and education, provide care coordination, advocate for quality student-centered care, and collaborate to design systems that allow individuals and communities to develop their full potentials" (NASN, 2016b). The ANA (2013) takes the position that the minimum preparation for beginning professional nursing practice in public health be a baccalaureate degree. The IOM (2010) recommends that nurses attain advanced education to be able to react to the increasing demands of nursing practice. School nursing requires advanced skills included in a baccalaureate program, which consists of the ability to practice

autonomously, supervise others, and delegate care in a community, rather than a hospital or clinic setting if allowed by state laws (ANA & NASN, 2011).

NASN's Framework for 21st Century School Nursing Practice™ provides structure and focus for current, evidence-based school nursing practice. School nurses use these skills outlined in the practice components of each principle (NASN, 2016c). School nurses work with a vulnerable pediatric community population to achieve improved health outcomes (Kulbok, Thatcher, Park, & Meszaros, 2012). Williams and Counts (2013) found that the public benefits from the certification of nurses by way of improved client safety, increased nurse knowledge and skills, and focused nurse professional development throughout their career. "Certification for school nurses benefits the public by recognizing those nurses that have competence beyond the novice level" (Selekman & Wolfe, 2010, Preface).

CONCLUSION

Licensed registered nurses who work in the specialty practice of school nursing require advanced skills to address the complex health needs of students within a school community setting (ANA/NASN, 2011). These skills are attained through a minimum of a baccalaureate degree in nursing and validated by specialized certification in school nursing (IOM, 2011).

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Acknowledgement of Authors:

Valerie Beshears, MSN, RN, NCSN
Elizabeth Clark, MSN, RN, NCSN
Patrice Lambert, MSN, RN, SNC

2012 Authors:

Jodi Sheets, BSN, RN
Carmen Teskey, MA, BSN, RN
Barbara Yow, MEd, BSN, RN, NCSN

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www.nasn.org
National Association of School Nurses
1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 925
Silver Spring, MD 20910
1-240-821-1130