

Management of a Student with Diabetes in the School Setting Guidelines for Implementing HB 984

Introduction

Texas School Nurses Organization joins the National Association of School Nurses their tenet of “Supporting Student Success.” The impact of the school nurse in a student’s emotional, academic and physical success is most evident in the monitoring, case management, and education of students with chronic health issues, and in the role as the health care leader and resource for the school staff who work with these students.

Diabetes is the second most common chronic disease that impairs the body’s ability to use food for energy. It is one of the most common chronic diseases in school aged children, affecting 1 in every 400-500 children under 20 years of age. In Texas more than 1.3 million individuals have diagnosed diabetes, and an additional 343,000 Texans are estimated to have undiagnosed diabetes.¹ Conservative estimates rank diabetes as the 6th leading cause of death in Texas with African Americans and Hispanics populations greatly impacted.

Over seventeen million Americans have diabetes and over 200,000 individuals die each year of related complications. Long-term complications include heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney disease and amputations of limbs. In the year 2002, the direct and indirect cost of diabetes reached \$132 Billion in the United States, averaging \$13,000 per each person with diabetes.

Diabetes is a life long condition, requiring monitoring and judgment in all areas of an individual’s life, including exercise, nutrition and illness. Students with diabetes possess the unlimited potential for academic success along with their classmates, but also need the support of caring adults to guide them as they assume increasing responsibility and independence for their disease management to maintain wellness and prevent or delay complications.

HB 984 was passed in the 79th legislative session to require schools in Texas to provide consistency for the care of students with diabetes in Texas. HB 984 amends the Health and Safety Code (Chapter 168) to ensure that students with diabetes obtain appropriate care at school and while participating in any school activity to enhance their health and ensure their safety and optimize academic performance. It also provides the opportunity for professional school nurses to assume a leadership role in the implementation of the bill’s components, and facilitates the collaboration and relationships, which are needed to ensure the health and safety of students with diabetes.

HB 984 requires that in each school in which a student with diabetes is enrolled, the school principal shall seek school employees, who are not health care professionals, to serve as Unlicensed Diabetes Care Assistants, who will be trained to care for students with diabetes. A written prescription, from a diabetic student’s physician, is required for the daily and urgent management of care, including the authorization for self-care. A written consent from the parent is required to authorize the trained Unlicensed Diabetic Care Assistant to care for the student with diabetes.

HB 984 requires a collaborative effort between the student, parent, physician, teacher and school nurse to develop a student's Individual Health Plan, which includes the routine treatment and care that will be available for the student, and emergency interventions that will be provided to the student. A thorough training and annual retraining program is required for the unlicensed personnel to provide information and obtain the necessary skills to manage and provide daily and urgent care as needed. This training can be provided by an RN, a certified diabetic educator or a physician/endocrinologist, knowledgeable about diabetes and school district policy and State and Federal laws.

This manual is intended to support the professional school nurse in the leadership role for the implementation of HB 984, using the established model developed by the Richardson Independent School District to enhance the standards of care for students with diabetes in school. Through the collaboration of several agencies, including the Texas Board of Nurse Examiners, the Texas Department of School Health Services' School Health Program and Texas Diabetes Council and the Texas School Nurse Organization, this manual provides specific recommendations for nursing practice and campus implementation, in the absence of definitive instructions in the language of HB 984.