



TEXAS SCHOOL NURSES ORGANIZATION

POSITION STATEMENT

Medication Administration in the School Setting

HISTORY:

Schools are accountable to provide safe, legal and appropriate care for students. This includes the administration of medication necessary during the school day in order for the student to attend school and take full advantage of his or her educational program. An increasing number of students are taking medication while they are in school. (1) Many of these medications are controlled substances, requiring special precautions. Some medications are administered via injection, nasal or gastric tubes, ports, or other routes. This presents unique challenges for schools and school nurses in safely and effectively administering medications to their student populations.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE:

The safe and effective use of medications for the treatment of certain medical conditions and illnesses has enabled many children to attend school and achieve academic success. Students receive medications at school for a variety of reasons ranging from treatment of acute conditions to chronic illnesses to complex disabilities. Some students may require medications for life-threatening emergencies (2).

Important issues confronting the school nurse regarding the administration of medications include, but are not limited to the following (3):

- Safe administration of the medications
- Adherence to safe nursing practice, state practice acts, and the applicable state laws and regulations
- Ongoing monitoring of therapeutic benefits, adverse reactions and any side effects associated with the medications
- Appropriate communication with the student, family, school personnel and health care providers
- Proper documentation
- Use of alternative and homeopathic remedies for self-limiting conditions
- Management of both over-the-counter (OTC) medications and prescription medications
- Self administration of medications by students
- Need for delegation of medication administration to UAP within the school setting
- Confidentiality
- Ongoing attempts by legislative bodies to change any part of school board policies regarding the administration of medications in schools

RATIONALE:

The Texas Board of Nursing believes that school nursing is a professional registered nursing (RN) specialty (4). School nursing involves the identification, prevention and intervention to remedy or modify students' health needs. The RN has the educational preparation and critical thinking skills as well as clinical expertise which are essential to nursing in the school setting. As the school staff member most involved in the medication issue, the school nurse should have input into development of school district policies and procedures regarding the administration of medication. The school nurse should also be able to clarify the differences in prescription, dispensation and administration authority as outlined by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (5).

CONCLUSION:

It is the position of the Texas School Nurses Organization that school districts develop policies and procedures to address medication administration in accordance with federal and state laws and guidelines. TSNO recommends that the school nurse, as well as other school district personnel, parents, school medical advisors, pharmacists, and legal counsel, be included in policy development to ensure that the numerous issues surrounding medication administration are addressed. Confidentiality must be a priority for the school nurse and any designees that administer medications to students in the school setting.

The school nurse can administer medication safely and effectively under the following guidelines, at a minimum:

- Adherence to state nurse practice acts and state laws governing these practices, school nurse standards of practice and school policies.
- Medications should be limited to those required during school hours to maintain the student and those needed in an emergency.
- It is strongly recommended that the school NOT purchase and/or provide any OTC medication to students. Parents must provide the OTC medications. School administrators may formalize this as written policy. Dispensing and administering OTC medications to students without parental provision of, and written request for, such medication (e.g., Tylenol for a headache) constitutes practicing medicine without a license because it assumes diagnosis and treatment of a patient symptom (6).
- School districts should not provide any medication for students or personnel (6).
- Medication must be brought to school in the original, properly labeled container (7).
- Information on the container must include the student's name, the name of the drug, dosage amount, route of administration, the time interval of the dose, and the name of the prescribing licensed healthcare provider.
- The parent/guardian must request in writing that the medication be administered at school.
- The school nurse, based on nursing assessment, determines that the medication can be given at school.
- The administration of medication in no way violates nursing protocols or standing orders.

- The school nurse is aware of and has access to current reliable information regarding the safe use of the medication including side effects and toxicity, possible drug interactions, adverse effects and expected outcomes. Any medication which does not have FDA approval and a list of ingredients with known side effects- such as herbals, home remedies and dietary supplements- should not be administered at school (8)
- Medications are stored in a locked cabinet.
- Procedures must be in place for receiving, administration of, and accountability for all medications in the school setting.
- Some districts may have protocols allowing them to have standing orders signed by the school physician that authorizes nurses to administer emergency medication including epinephrine to any individual who has no history of allergies and who exhibits symptoms of anaphylaxis (9).

The implementation of appropriate guidelines will assist the school nurse in conjunction with the local education agency in meeting their responsibility to foster the protection of the health, safety, and welfare of the students, school personnel, and general public during the administration of medications in the school setting.

References:

- (1) The Journal of School Nursing *August 2008 vol. 24 no. 4 239-248*
- (2) American Academy of Pediatrics (2009) - *Policy statement. Guidance for the administration of medication in school Pediatrics, Vol. 124 No. 4 October 2009*
- (3) National Association of School Nurses (2003) - *Position statement: Medication Administration in the School Setting. Available at <http://www.nasn.org/Default.aspx?tabid=230>*
- (4) Texas Board of Nursing <http://www.bne.state.tx.us/> 15.13 *Role Of LVNs and RNs As School Nurses*
- (5) Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation <http://www.tdlr.state.tx.us/>
- (6) The Texas Guide to School Health Programs *Chapter 5 Medication Administration*
<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/schoolhealth/pgtoc.shtm>
- (7) Texas Education Code *Chapter 22 Section 22.052*
- (8) Texas Board of Nursing <http://www.bne.state.tx.us/> *Rule 217.11 Standards of Nursing Practice*
- (9) *Pediatrics 2005;116;1134-1140*