

The Life of a School Nurse

I decided to visit our local school system. I have always been interested in all the many jobs and functions that are done on an average school day (my mom works at the central office). Starting at the top you have the Superintendent, Asst. Superintendent, Personnel Director, Finance Director, Food Director, Exceptional Children's Director, Title I Director, Bus Director, and Maintenance Director. These people work at the Central Office and then they have employees located in various places including our schools.

The person I chose to interview is the School Nurse, there are several located throughout the school district. Nurses are very busy people and a lot is required of them to keep up with the constant health changes and the 6000 plus students that attend the Elizabeth City Schools.

Below is a summary of what I have learned about school nurses:

Qualifications: Be a registered nurse licensed in North Carolina with a B.S. degree. Must pass school nurse certification exam within 3 years of employment.

- Be a person of unquestionable morals and integrity
- Present acceptable recommendations from persons, preferably former employers, who can attest that the applicant possesses the personal characteristics and professional competence for satisfying performance of assigned duties

Terms of Employment: Abide by school calendar for 10-month employees

Salary: North Carolina state salary scale based on credentials and experience

Evaluation: Once a year based on Roles and Responsibilities of the Nurse in the School Health Program

Manager of the total school health program:

- Review/establish school health policies
- Ensure that policies and procedures are in place and implemented consistently throughout the school district (including medication training and first responders)
- Assess the health needs of the school and identify students with chronic illness & special health needs
- Provide individual education to faculty and staff regarding specific students
- Develop Emergency Action Plans (EAP) as appropriate
- Ongoing monitoring of students with special needs
- Serve on the school's student assistance team to assist with educational placement for students with special needs

- Coordinate necessary services for chronically ill students (serves as liaison between school and community; has knowledge of community resources)
- Collaborate with other student services team members to prevent health problems from becoming reasons for educational failure
- Deliver health services to students in school
- Coordinate school health services such as health screening/immunization review /K health assessment
- Make appropriate referrals and maintain a 95% “secured care” rate
- Support family in finding and using appropriate treatment services
- Conduct biannual safety survey of school campus and notify appropriate person of problems

Counselor for Health Concerns of Students, Family and Staff:

- Serve as a leader for communicable disease control
- Consult with principals and faculty to establish priorities and needs of school (s)
- Conduct in-service training on health issues for faculty and staff
- Serve as resource for classroom education
- Provide classroom education as time allows
- Provide health counseling/guidance to students in groups or on an individual basis; develop programs for students with special areas of interest- (ex: open airways for students with asthma)
- Attend faculty/staff meetings regularly

Evaluation: Perform ongoing evaluation of school health program

Documentation:

- Maintain appropriate data on students’ permanent health records
- Maintain a confidential personal care system
- Submit End of the Year Report to principal, superintendents and school board members

Professional Development:

- Participate in educational offerings (Annual School Nurse Conference; Regional School Nurse Meetings)

As you can see there are so many policies and procedures to follow but the most rewarding is when you walk into a school and the younger students call you by name and give you hugs. This is what makes the job worth it – knowing you are making a difference. Many times you might find yourself doing more than just being a nurse so you learn to adapt and adjust to the world of school because each day is different.