



National Association of School Nurses

POSITION STATEMENT

Education, Licensure, and Certification of School Nurses

HISTORY:

Expectations for preparation of school nurses have evolved within the context of the larger nursing profession. The early education of nurses occurred primarily in hospitals with those who completed programs receiving diplomas. Over time, most nursing education transferred from hospitals to institutions of higher learning (Donahue, 1996). In addition, different levels of nursing practice emerged. Today, Licensed Practical Nurses/Licensed Vocational Nurses (LPN's/LVN's) typically attend a community college or vocational school for one year and do not receive a degree. Those who become Registered Nurses (RNs) attend a hospital program where they receive a diploma, a community college where they receive an associate degree, or a university where they receive a baccalaureate degree.

To practice as a professional nurse, all graduates must take and pass the state licensure exam. In addition to nursing licensure, some states require state certification to practice as a school nurse, with requirements varying by individual state. Licensure implies a minimal level of knowledge to practice safely, and certification generally implies a higher level of expertise. In the 1980's, the National Association of School Nurses (NASN), allowing school nurses to demonstrate a nationally accepted expert knowledge base for the practice of school nursing (Harrigan, 2002), developed a national certification examination. NASN established the National Board for Certification of School Nurses (NBCSN), which became an independent incorporated body in 1991, to assure that school nurse examinations were prepared by experts in the specialty practice.

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE:

For nurses, the minimal level of education for preparing for preparation in independent practice, leadership/management, and community health nursing is the baccalaureate degree and licensure as a registered nurse. In addition, certification at the state and national levels reflects more than a minimal knowledge base. As a nursing specialty, school nursing requires advanced skills that include the ability to practice independently, supervise others, and delegate care in a community health setting. (ANA, 2001).

RATIONALE:

Quality services to students and staff should be assured through appropriate education, licensure, and certification.

CONCLUSION:

It is the position of the National Association of School Nurses that every school-aged child deserves a school nurse who is a graduate of a baccalaureate degree program from an accredited college or university and licensed by that state as a registered nurse. These requirements are the minimal preparation for the skills needed at the entry level of school nursing practice. Additionally, NASN supports state certification, where required, and promotes national certification of school nurses through NBCSN.

References/Resources:

American Nurses Association (2001). *Scope and standards of professional school nursing practice*. Washington, DC: American Nurses Publishing.

Donahue, M.P. (1996). *Nursing: the finest art*. St. Louis, MO: Mosby-Year Book.

Harrigan, J.F. (2002). *Overview of school health services*. Scarborough, ME: National Association of School Nurses.

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