

**Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Maryland State Department of Education
Maryland State School Health Council**

**MARYLAND STATE SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES
GUIDELINES**

*Nursing Appraisal/Assessment of
Students with Special Health Needs*

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Nursing Appraisal/Assessment of Students with Special Health Needs

Introduction

All students with special health needs require a thorough nursing assessment. The school nurse will develop specific plans that take into consideration special accommodations students may require in school. This comprehensive document provides guidance to the school nurse in developing an individualized care plan for students with special health needs in coordination and collaboration with the family and the primary care provider.

Purpose

To provide guidelines to school nurses for the management and coordination of care of students with special health needs in schools to enable these students to attend school regularly and fully participate in their educational programs. This document also provides information that will help school staff provide the support required by students with special health needs.

Definition

Children with "special health care needs" are those who have or are at increased risk for a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally. *Pediatrics* 102(1) July 1998.

The Nursing Appraisal/Assessment

Data Collection

It is essential that the school nurse be well informed on all aspects of medical, educational, and social issues regarding students with special health needs. The school nurse collects information from a review of medical and educational records (i.e., the school health record, the student record card, emergency health card, special education records, and the cumulative student education record). Additional information should be obtained from:

- Parent interviews and/or home visits;
- Student interviews;
- Physicians/health care providers; and
- School staff; and
- Classroom observations

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Assessment

Based on the nurse's appraisal, a formal written nursing assessment is completed. The school nurse should assess the student with special health needs using standard assessment procedures developed by the local jurisdiction. The school nurse should be cognizant of policies regarding record releases, information sharing, and confidentiality. The assessment of the student with special health needs should include, but not be limited to the following:

Identifying information:

- Name of parents/guardian, address, phone number, and emergency contacts;
- Student's date of birth and grade;
- Health care provider's name and phone number; and
- Name and phone number of specialist (if the student is under the care of one).

General Health Information:

- Insurance status;
- Health and developmental history;
- Family history of specific disease;
- Birth history;
- Onset of health condition (e.g. asthma, diabetes) and date of diagnosis;
- History of health emergencies/hospitalizations;
- Identification of food and other allergies;
- Other health needs;
- Other diagnosed medical needs; and
- Immunization status.

Current health status:

- Specific symptoms/triggers student experiences;
- Management of health condition; and
- Frequency of hospitalizations for specific health condition(s).

Medication/treatment requirements ordered by health care provider:

- Medications;
- Treatments;
- Purpose of treatment;
- Level of independence;
- Frequency;
- Required at school;
- Performed in health suite or classroom;
- Equipment used; and
- Who performs?

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Educational information:

- Determine if the student has been referred to the student services team;
- Determine if a 504 accommodation plan or Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) has been developed;
- Educational level, grade placement, handicapping condition (per IEP);
- Determine if student participates in special programs, (e.g., Title 1, vocational programs, dropout prevention, alternative education programs, infants and toddlers program, pre-school programs, etc.);
- Determine if the student's health condition is affecting attendance;
- Determine if accommodations are required for participation in physical exercise;
- Determine if accommodation are required for recess/physical activity;
- Determine if the student's health condition is affecting school performance;
- Determine if home teaching is required; and
- Determine if the student's health condition requires a modification to the class schedule.

Other School Considerations:

- Other school-sponsored events;
- Accommodations for participation in sports events;
- Field trips (i.e., frequency, distance, overnight); and
- Other needed school services (e.g. nutrition, counseling, etc.)

Transportation:

- Determine how the student gets to and from school;
- If a bus rider - length of ride/special seating required;
- If a walker - length/time of walk;
- Determine if student is able to walk unaccompanied;
- Determine if emergency care is required (e.g. epi-pen, inhaler, or other medication);
- Determine if the student drives self to school; and
- Determine if nursing services are required during transport.

Family Information:

Where does the student reside and who lives in the home;

- Other siblings, ages, schools they attend and any health problems;
- Do parents/guardian work outside of the home;
- Is there before-and after-school child care provider;
- Family's understanding of disease and support;
- Emergency contact; and
- Home environment issues (carpet, pet, infestations, smoke, mold, heating sources).

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Nutritional Status:

- Food allergies;
- Hydration;
- Additional snacks required;
- GERD (gastro esophageal reflux disease);
- Height/weight;
- Gastric tube/ jejunostomy tube; and
- Modification to consistency/texture of food.

Mobility Issues:

- Is the student able to move unaccompanied; and
- What type of assistance is needed (include special equipment required).

Toileting Issues:

- Is the student able to toilet unaccompanied; and
- What type of assistance is needed (include special equipment required).

Psycho-social considerations:

- Perception of self;
- Level of independence in management of disease and/or care plan;
- Interaction with family, teachers, siblings, classmates;
- Family's ability to understand and cope with diagnosis and treatment;
- Management strategies at home;
- Stressors (i.e. divorce, financial level, frequent moves);
- Support- immediate family, extended family;
- Medical support;
- Does student qualify for free or reduced price meals;
- Friends;
- Extracurricular activities;
- Social events/holidays;
- Behavior issues, e.g. compliance with medical plan;
- Is family aware of support groups/organizations. Does family or the student participate in the support group(s);
- How medical expenses are covered. Is access to care an issue;
- Transportation to care;
- Out-of-home placement;
- Homeless, where does student reside; and

A copy of the nurse's final assessment should be placed in the student's health record and may be given to the parents/guardian and health care provider according to local policy.

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Planning and Interventions for Students with Special Health Needs in School

Upon completion of the assessment, the school nurse should develop a routine and emergency care plan. These plans should be shared with the appropriate school management team and school staff (including bus drivers). Copies should also be shared with the parents/guardians and physician according to local policy. It is important to remember that the objectives for the student are safety and independence in managing the chronic condition. The outcome of the interventions should be the optimum participation of the student in the educational process.

Coordination and Case Management

The school nurse is the liaison between the health care provider, school staff, administration, pupil service staff, parents/guardian and student. The school nurse can also refer the student and/or family to community resources such as counseling, support groups, and access to medical care. The nurse may be the most appropriate staff member to coordinate the management of the student with health needs.

Other school team members can contribute to the management of the student with special health needs in the following ways:

Administrators:	Overall responsibility for the education and safety of the student
Bus Drivers:	Manage student on bus, communicate problems or concerns with transportation office, school nurse and school administrator
Coaches/after-school advisor	Manage student in athletics, communicate problems or concerns with school nurse and school administrator
Food Services Staff:	Available to assist with dietary accommodations as necessary
Guidance Counselor:	Disability awareness, assist with support groups/counseling needs
Pupil Personnel Worker:	Assist with transportation issues, home teaching and attendance issues
School Psychologist:	Assist with any behavioral strategies
Teachers:	Manage student in class, communicate problems or concerns with school nurse and school administrator
OT/PT/Speech Therapists:	Provides consultation and specific treatment as outlined on the student's 504 Plan or IEP

Staff Training

Discipline specific staff training (teachers, bus drivers, school food services, etc.) may include:

- Definition of the health need;
- Classroom Accommodations;
- Bus Accommodations;
- Field Trip Accommodations;
- Symptoms to Report to the school nurse;
- Confidentiality;
- Understanding the emergency protocol;
- The need for substitute plans (for classroom, school health, transportation, and food services staff); and
- Medication and treatment

Education Planning

The school nurse is an integral part of the educational team and is vital in planning the educational accommodations for the student with special health needs. The needs of the student with special health needs are supported by a thorough nursing assessment and development of emergency care plans; however, some students with special health needs may require additional educational accommodations. If the student requires more specific educational accommodations, a 504 plan may be developed. If a student with a special health concern qualifies for special education services, an IEP may include specific accommodation.

Special issues that may need to be considered:

- Accommodations because of a vocational assignment, i.e. location of emergency medications;
- Field trip accommodations;
- Bus accommodations;
- School-sponsored activities; and
- Extra-curricular activities (e.g. prom and graduation).

Monitoring/Evaluation

Evaluation is an ongoing process and should include the following:

- Assessment and documentation of student's response to the management plan;
- Effectiveness of the plan to meet the student's health and educational needs;
- Orders reviewed with family and health care provider at least annually and as necessary;
- Documentation of medications and treatments given;
- Effective communication with the health care provider and family;
- Periodic staff training; and
- Classroom observation.

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References

Role And Responsibilities Of The School Nurse (Registered Nurse) And The Child With Special Health Care Needs. Maryland Board of Nursing, 1990.