

These tips are provided to guide independent Vermont schools in creating a position for a school nurse. The COVID-19 pandemic is motivating schools to employ a health care professional (clinician) to help staff understand and apply public health guidance as it relates to the school's community. The school nurse role includes clinical care, public health, leadership, quality improvement, and care coordination within a defined set of standards of practice.

Identify the need

Identify your school's unique needs and outline a vision for school health services. Use these questions to guide your process:

- What health duties does your school already have in place, such as: providing first aid, medication administration, tracking immunization records, annual well care, dental exams, and sports clearance forms? Who is your current medical advisor and what are your referral procedures for injuries or sick visits?
- What policies and procedures does your school currently have for health issues, such as medication administration, concussion, and allergy protocols?
- How might your school collaborate with other schools of a similar type?
- Does technology allow for staff to access student's health information, policy, and procedure documents off-site? Does the technology support clinical decision making, and allow for the sharing of a school nurse between schools?
- What kind of training do non-clinical personnel need to support students who have health issues. Some examples of supporting student's health needs include training school staff to administer epinephrine for life threatening allergies, managing asthma and diabetes, responding to somebody having a seizure, and tracking immunization records.
- Does the school support staff training so that health care services such as: IEP meetings, tube feedings, and seizure management can be provided at the school building?
- Are there community resources nearby that may be able to assist when the school nurse is not present, such as: clinics or provider offices?
- What other community resources does the school collaborate with to serve students and personnel like dental care, medical or mental health care?

Public health and care coordination

A school nurse assesses and educates students and personnel about public health and care coordination. The nurse develops and implements protocols in collaboration with school leaders to help improve health, safety, and academic outcomes. This work includes:

- Coordinating with students, families, school personnel, and community resources to manage students with chronic and acute health issues such as: asthma, life-threatening allergies, concussion management, substance misuse, and mental health.

- Analyzing student's immunization records for the prevention of infectious diseases.
- Maintaining strong links with the state and local health department to reduce the risk of infectious disease, mental health concerns, substance misuse disorders, health education, screenings, referrals and follow up.
- Partnering with the School Liaison at the local health department to integrate current public health information into health and safety planning.
- Monitoring the school's public health by tracking disease transmission, providing education about disease prevention, and reporting to the health department.

Vermont criteria for School Nursing

- Registered Nurse for 4 years or 6,000 hrs. as a licensed RN plus:
- Completion of the New School Nurse Orientation (online) and,
- Licensed School Nurses are required to have a bachelor's degree in nursing from an approved college or,
- Associate School Nurses are required to have an associate degree in nursing from an approved college.

Operational steps for hiring a school nurse

- Create the job description (samples are available in the School Health Services section of the Standards of Practice: [School Health Services Manual](#) page10).
- Post the job description in the local papers, and on the Vermont State School Nurses' Association, Vermont American Nurses Association, and School Spring websites.
- Salary ranges for RNs in this region can be found on the Vermont Department of Labor website.
- Upon hiring, refer the nurse to the State School Nurse Consultant to access the New School Nurse Orientation.
- Upon completion of the orientation apply to the Vermont Agency of Education for a transcript review, usually initiated by the superintendent or headmaster.
- Work with the State School Nurse Consultant to:
 - Assist with linking to a potential school nurse mentor for RNs new to School Nursing
 - Access a tool for the nurse's annual self-evaluation and job performance review.

Resources

- [Department of Labor Wages - Vermont](#)
- [Essential School Health Services – VT Sample Description for SN Leader pg. 8](#)
- [Framework for 21st Century School Nursing Practice, National Association of School Nurses](#)

- [Suggested first aid supplies – School Nurse Go-Bag, Vermont School Crisis Team](#)
- [School Health Services – Sample SN job descriptions, pg. 10](#)
- [Standards of Practice: School Health Services Manual – Vermont](#)
- [State School Nurse Consultant – sharonlee.trefry@vermont.gov](#)
- [Vermont Agency of Education – Transcript Review](#)
- [Vermont State School Nurses’ Association – Career Center](#)
- [Vermont State Nurses Association – Career Center](#)

Frequently asked questions

- Can the school nurse work independently and not be affiliated with a local clinic, or do we need to formalize a relationship with a pediatrician or hospital network?
 - By the nature of the specialty, school nursing is an independent practice by registered nurses (RN). In most states, RNs work independently within their scope of practice defined in statute.
- Is telemedicine an option for a school nurse?
 - School nurses are typically not practicing medicine but can provide telehealth services in accordance with the schools’ privacy policy and procedures, and in alignment with FERPA and/or HIPAA where appropriate.
- Does the nurse’s workspace need to conform to any specific building code?
 - The health office needs to provide enough room for the school nurse to do their work. There will need to be storage space for documents, training materials and student health records.
 - Private space for confidential consultations with students, families, and school personnel must be available, and space to separate sick individuals from those who are well.
- What are the requirements for office equipment?
 - A health office should include a desk, computer, locked storage, physical space for confidential consultations, and one cot or more depending on needs.
 - The health office must include access to a bathroom with a sink, hot water and soap, and immediate access to a phone.
 - Supplies include, but are not limited to, those needed to provide health assessments such as: blood pressure cuff, and first aid supplies. The nurse will need supplies for training and for educating staff.