

**Guidelines for
Provision of Health Services
On Field Trips or Extracurricular Activities
For Colorado School Nurses and School Districts**

Field trips are offered by schools to enhance the educational experience of students. The number of students with chronic health conditions requiring increasingly complex medical/nursing procedures continues to rise. Frequently, a student with significant health issues will be eligible as a student with a disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and served under a Section 504 plan or Individualized Education Program (IEP). In any event, early and careful planning for students with health care needs is important to ensure these students are not improperly excluded from an activity and can safely participate.

It is important to note that special legal protections apply to students with disabilities who have a Section 504 plan or IEP. School districts have a legal obligation to ensure students with disabilities are able to participate in the school's programs, including field trips and extracurricular activities, to the fullest extent possible, including through the use of accommodations. Denying a student with special health care needs the right to participate in extracurricular activities or field trips solely due to the student's disability violates IDEA and/or Section 504. For eligible students, decisions about the student's participation in field trips should occur during the child's IEP or 504 meeting.

School nurses are essential to the decision making process when determining the level of health care that must be provided in any extracurricular activity or field trip. Factors to consider for the student's safe participation include:

- the length of the field trip or intensity of activity
- the destination or location
- the availability of adequate emergency response
- the ability to adequately supervise any assigned delegations including ability of the staff to contact the nurse with problems or questions
- the competency of the staff accompanying the students to provide the necessary health care and ratio of staff to students.

Delegation of health care tasks by the nurse can occur if appropriate for the particular student using professional standards of care, following Chapter XIII Rules and Regulations, and the Colorado Nurse Practice Act. As defined in the Chapter XIII Rules and Regulations of the State Board of Nursing, the decision to delegate shall be based on the delegator's assessments of the following:

1. The student's health care needs including, but not limited to, complexity and frequency of the health care, stability of the student, and degree of immediate risk to the student if the task is not carried out;
2. The delegatee's knowledge, skills and abilities after training has been provided;
3. The nature of the task being delegated including, but not limited to, degree of invasiveness, irreversibility, predictability of outcome, and potential for harm;
4. The availability and accessibility of resources, including but not limited to, appropriate equipment, adequate supplies and appropriate other health care personnel to meet the student's nursing care needs; and
5. The availability of adequate supervision of the delegatee.

General Recommendations

- The student's case manager or activity coordinator should notify the school nurse of any upcoming field trips or extracurricular activities in sufficient time to provide input regarding safe care during the trip or activity. Without advanced notice, the school nurse may be unable to provide training or delegate nursing services and the student's safety and/or participation in the field trip may be compromised. Exclusion of the student due to lack of planning will likely be considered disability discrimination.
- The Section 504, IEP team or other recognized process should include consideration of the school nurse's review of the student's health care needs and necessary accommodations, recommendations for training, and plans for emergency care. If delegation is an issue, the school nurse will need to coordinate with school administration regarding the level of care required to provide safe health care services for the student and the qualifications of the individuals who will provide such care.
- One or more individuals responsible for the healthcare needs of the group should be specifically designated. Appropriate individuals may include a registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, Health Aide, or a staff member. If the healthcare provider is not a RN, a registered nurse must delegate medication administration and any nursing care tasks that need to be performed following the delegation procedures described above. This designated staff member should be in close proximity to those students with special needs during the activity including during transport.
- The parents should be asked to provide information on any special health care which the child will need as well as any physical problems which would limit the child's activity. Written authorization to obtain treatment in an emergency should be provided by parents as well as current parent contact information for all students participating in the field trip.
- Healthcare plans are written by the school nurse for students with special health care needs and typically deal with the delivery of health services and/or emergencies during the school day. These care plans are not adequate for overnight, extended trips or trips out of state and should be

supplemented to reflect after hours care. It is important that the healthcare plan is available to EMS if emergency services are rendered for the student.

- Parents or guardians should be made aware of how health care will be provided during the trip and qualifications of those providing the care. Their signature on the consent form indicates that they agree to the outlined plan of care for the trip, including accessing emergency services.
- Parents may attend the field trip and assume responsibility for providing health care services for their child but their attendance cannot be required as a condition of their child participating. In some cases, it may be appropriate for a parent or guardian to assign a family member, who is NOT an employee of the school district, to carry out health care for their child during the field trip. The school district may need to screen the designee per the school district's policy.
- EMS (Emergency Medical Services) should be available within reasonable proximity to the field trip location. Adequate cell phone coverage should also be considered when planning the trip. At least one staff member on the trip should have current CPR/1st aid training.
- If accompanying out of state field trips, the nurse will need to take into consideration whether that state participates in the multi-state Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC). If it does, the nurse needs to abide by the Nurse Practice Act in the state where the field trip is taking place as well as any states through which transport and overnight stays are occurring. If the state does not participate in the NLC, a temporary license may need to be obtained to legally practice nursing in that state.
- School districts who believe a student with a disability should not participate in a field trip or other extracurricular activity due to a legitimate health or safety risk for that student should seek additional guidance the school district's own attorney.

References

Delegation of Care: Overview for the Registered Nurse Practicing in the School Setting (2005), National Association of School Nurses, Inc., Silver Spring, MD.

Schwab, N. and Gelfman, M. (2005). *Legal Issues in School Health Services*. Lincoln: iUniverse.

National Association of School Nurses, Position Statement, *Field Trips and Extended School Trips* (2006).

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