



Licensed School Nurse Facts in Minnesota

Current law in Minnesota:

Licensed School Nurses (LSN) are Registered Nurses (RN) with a bachelor's degree or higher and have public health preparation. Minnesota law (Minnesota Statute 121A.21) only requires a Licensed School Nurse if there are 1,000 or more students in the district. A district with 999 students isn't required to hire a Licensed School Nurse and a school district with 6,000 is only required to employ one Licensed School Nurse. This law was passed in 1986 and is woefully inadequate.

Since 1986, medical technology has greatly improved and premature babies now have survival rates, at 26 weeks and 27 weeks, of 80% and 90%, respectively. These children are coming to school with incredible medical needs with life-threatening allergies, diabetes, asthma, seizures, mental health issues, have G-tubes, and tracheostomies, require medications, and many, many more health needs. The increase in the number of medical issues is staggering.

By the Numbers:

- **637 (not FTEs) Licensed School Nurses employed in public schools.**
- **1,360 Licensed School Nurses licensed by PELSB:**
- **2,122 Public School buildings**
- **325 Public Elementary & Secondary ISD's/ 184 Charter Schools / 37 Special Ed & Coop Districts**
- **894,677 students in Minnesota public schools.**
- **Only 1 in 3 Schools have a Licensed School Nurse**
- **1;1,403 Approximate Nurse to Student ratio. (not calculated by FTE as many schools have a .25 or .5 FTE Licensed School Nurse)***

*The Minnesota Department of Education does not track actual ratio data and this is an estimate of limited existing data.

Access and Equity for Students in Minnesota:

Schools and districts vary greatly in whether and how they provide school health services. SNOM believes that all students should have equal access to adequate and appropriate health care.

Parents Don't Know who is in the School Health Office

Parents trust that their children, for short-term health problems or chronic conditions, will have nursing care at school. They expect that when they write a note to the "School Nurse", the person is a qualified health provider. However, most schools do not have Licensed School Nurses and many of the people staffing the health office are office assistants who have little or no medical training. Parents should know the qualifications of the people handling the medical needs of their students. The state has no reporting system where parents can access this information.

Health Data:

There are no requirements for reporting student health or services provided to the state education agency or health agency other than immunizations and flu outbreaks. We don't know the extent of the health needs of our children and our youth. Policymakers are making decisions without basic information. How many incidents related to asthma attacks, diabetes, anaphylaxis, seizures, 911 calls for medical or mental health crises, or disease outbreaks occur in a year? The lack of data does not allow for informed decision-making, improvement, or promotion of student health. We should be able to analyze data across the state and district to see what models are in place and which are successful.

Guidance from the MDE

For approximately 6 years, there has been no Licensed School Nurse at the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to address student health from the statewide perspective and give guidance to schools. SNOM was able to advocate for federal funding through the Cares Act for funding such a position through October 2024. However, this should state-leadership position should receive ongoing funding from the Minnesota Legislature.

SOLUTIONS:

- 1. The current 1986 law should be amended to provide more funding and require districts to hire a Licensed School Nurse in every school so that children have their health needs addressed and are safe at school. Funding sources from several other sources should be considered as it is in other states.**
- 2. The Licensed School Nurse at the MDE should be a permanent position and funding should be included in the base funding for the agency.**
- 3. A Grow Your Own type of program could be an incentive for individuals who have partial degrees to become Licensed School Nurses.**