



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 special 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, tracheostomies, require medications and many, many more health needs. The increase in the number of medical issues is staggering.

By the Numbers:

Number of Licensed School Nurses employed in public schools as of 1/4/21: 637 (not FTE)

Number of Licensed School Nurses licensed by PELSB: 1,360

Number of students in Minnesota public schools: 894,677. (2020-2021)

Number of public school buildings: 2,122 (2020-2021)

1. **Only 1/3 of Minnesota schools have a Licensed School Nurse. (637 / 2,122).** Approximately 2/3 do not.
2. **Nurse-to-student statewide ratio: 1: 1,403.** The number of nurses is not calculated by FTE. Some schools have .25 or .5 FTE Licensed School Nurses.

NOTE: To our knowledge the Minnesota Department of Education does not have actual ratio data. The numbers are the best of our ability to assemble some sort of ratio. These numbers are a conservative estimate. SNOM feels this data should be gathered as it is for other school-related personnel.

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 a 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. Policy makers 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 districts to see what models are in place and which are successful.

Schools without Licensed School Nurses:

- Who is providing the care for the health and safety of our students?
- How are chronic health conditions managed?
- Is care properly documented?
- Who is training and supervising staff so that all students can be safe?
- Who is providing the health assessment for IEPs?
- Is the care appropriate, accurate, adequate, safe, and evidence-based?

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 on-going funding from the Minnesota Legislature.

SOLUTIONS:

1. The current 1986 law should be amended to provide more funding and require districts to hire more Licensed School Nurses 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.

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