



Licensed School Nurse Facts in Minnesota School Nurse Organization of Minnesota (SNOM)

Current law in Minnesota:

Licensed School Nurses (LSN) are Registered Nurses (RN) with a bachelor's degree or higher who hold public health certification and licensure through PELSB. Current Minnesota law (Minnesota Statute 121A.21) only requires a Licensed School Nurse in a school district if there are 1,000 or more students enrolled. A district with 999 students isn't required to hire a Licensed School Nurse and a school district with 39,000 is only required to employ one Licensed School Nurse. This law was passed in 1986 and is woefully inadequate.

Since 1986, there have been great improvements in medical technology. . Premature babies now have survival rates, at 26 weeks and 27 weeks, of 80% and 90%, respectively. SNOM is grateful to have these children coming to school, however, many have complex medical needs. The acuity and needs of students with life threatening allergies, diabetes, asthma, seizures, mental health conditions, G-tubes, tracheostomies and ostomies, students who require medications and specialized care during the school day has increased exponentially. The growing need for supportive care at school is staggering.

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

By the Numbers:

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

NOTE: The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) does not track actual ratio data. These numbers are conservative estimate. SNOM feels this data should be gathered and reported for LSN's as it is for other school-related personnel such as school counselors, social workers, and psychologists.

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 safe, adequate and appropriate health care.

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

Parents trust that their children will have nursing care at school, whether that is for a short term health need or the management of chronic conditions. They have an expectation that when they write a note to the "School Nurse", the person who receives the note 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. Currently, the state has no reporting system that allows parents to access this information.

Health Data:

There are no requirements for reporting data regarding student health or the health services provided in schools to the state education agency or health agency other than data specific to school-required immunizations and infectious condition outbreaks. Without this information, we cannot fully 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 in the school setting? The lack of tracked data does not allow for informed decision making, improvement of, 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 proving to be successful.

When schools are without Licensed School Nurses:

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

Guidance from the MDE

For approximately 6 years, there was no Licensed School Nurse at the 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 such a position through October 2024. However, this LSN position, should receive permanent funding from the Minnesota Legislature to continue to provide guidance to school health professionals and administration throughout the state.

SOLUTIONS:

1. **One School, One Nurse, HF 2037/SF2256:** Funds and requires districts to hire LSNs in every school so that there is access and equity throughout the state and so children have their health needs addressed and can come to school safe, healthy, and ready to learn. Funding sources from several other sources should be considered as it is in other states.
2. **LSN at MDE, SF 1607/HF 1572MDE:** Funds an LSN position permanently at the MDE.
3. **School Nurse Recruitment Grants , SF1606/HF 1522:** Creates a grant program at the MDE to increase partnerships between school districts and colleges to train and certify school nurses to better serve rural and lower- income school districts and provide opportunities for more diversity in school health offices.

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