

## HOW SCHOOL NURSES USE 'DELEGATION' TO PROVIDE CARE

Teachers and school principals often delegate teaching tasks at school. For example, a teacher may 'delegate' to an assistant the task of helping a student with reading or math.

When school nurses delegate care for a student to a non-school nurse, it requires the school nurse to teach the non-nurse how to perform a specific task usually only school nurses can do. What is delegated is the task – and not the nursing judgement around why or when the task may need to be performed at school. States have different laws regarding what only nurses can do and what non-nurses can do with the support of a nurse. Nursing delegation **requires** oversight by a nurse, or school physician when available.

The school nurse has the medical expertise, is licensed, and is qualified to delegate nursing care tasks at school. (Note: The only other school staff member able to delegate care tasks at school would be the school physician, if there was one available at school.)

First, the school nurse must decide if delegating a care task to a non-nurse is the best choice for the student. To make this decision:

- The student and family must agree this is the best plan of care.
- The school nurse will ask the following questions:
  - Does the state law allow this care task to be given by a non-nurse?
  - Does a school policy allow the school nurse to delegate the care to a non-nurse?
  - Are there healthcare provider orders in place to provide this care at school?
  - Is the student's health and safety still protected when a non-nurse provides the care?
  - Can the school nurse find the right non-nurse to do the job?
  - Will the non-nurse keep the school nurse informed about the student?
  - Will the school nurse be able to supervise the non-nurse and the student?

Based on the above, the school nurse will determine if care should be provided by the school nurse only or provided by a non-nurse with school nurse support.

The following are the steps a school nurse takes when the decision is made to delegate nursing care tasks to a non-nurse at school:

- identifies the care needed to support a student's health as outlined in the student's individualized healthcare plan
- develops step-by-step checklists for each nursing care task for the non-nurse to follow
- trains the non-nurse on how to perform the care task using the checklist
- provides ongoing supervision of the non-nurse
- provides ongoing monitoring of the student's health

The school nurse remains in charge of and responsible for the student's health when care tasks are delegated to non-nurses at school. Delegating care does not replace the school nurse - schools **need** school nurses to oversee care if non-nurses are providing nursing care tasks delegated by the school nurse.