

# FACT SHEET FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, FAMILIES, AND SCHOOL PERSONNEL

## NURSING DELEGATION REQUIRES THE SCHOOL NURSE

### Background:

Nursing delegation is an essential professional nursing competency and must be differentiated from other forms of delegation that happen in schools. An example of this is a teacher delegating to a teaching assistant the task of providing reading support to a student. Nursing delegation is an important practice component of the Care Coordination principle in the National Association of School Nurses' *21st Century Framework for School Nursing Practice*<sup>TM, 1</sup>

Nursing delegation is a critical competency that must be learned and practiced by the school nurse. The nursing tasks that may be delegated must be within the scope of practice of the school nurse and are also regulated by state law, most commonly by state nurse practice acts. It is the responsibility of the school nurse to know what is permitted in their jurisdiction and to remain apprised of current law.

Nursing delegation requires the nurse to first identify the student health need that could be met by safely delegating a nursing task to an unlicensed assistive personnel (UAP). Nursing delegation requires the school nurse to delegate the performance of a specific nursing task, in a specific situation, for a specific student, to an UAP. The school nurse—not a school administrator—delegates, trains the delegatee, retains accountability for the outcome of the delegation, provides ongoing supervision of the UAP, and evaluates the student's health outcomes. Nursing tasks can be delegated. But components of the critical thinking process of the school nurse, known as the nursing process (e.g., doing a nursing assessment, making a judgment based on the assessment findings) cannot be delegated.<sup>2-6</sup>

### How the school nurse delegates a nursing task:

The decision of whether to delegate is based upon the judgment of the school nurse and must address the following questions:

- Does the state nurse practice act allow delegation?
- Does school policy and the school nurse job description support nursing delegation, allowing for adequate time for training and ongoing supervision of the UAP by the school nurse?
- Do the students' healthcare provider orders allow for the tasks to be performed at school?
- Are the student and family agreeable to the plan to use nursing delegation as part of the student's individualized healthcare plan (IHP)?
- Does the school nurse have the competence to train the UAP on the task?
- Does the nursing task meet the five rights of nursing delegation?
  - Right task—Is the task based on medical healthcare provider orders and part of the student's IHP?
  - Right circumstance—Student safety is central: Is the student's health status stable enough to have a task performed by a UAP, someone who will not be able to assess the student in the way a nurse would do?
  - Right person—Can the school nurse identify a UAP who is willing and able to competently perform the nursing task?
  - Right directions and communication—Can specific sequenced instructions be provided to the UAP? Does the UAP understand how and when to communicate with the school nurse?
  - Right supervision and evaluation—Does the school nurse have the ability to provide ongoing supervision of the UAP and evaluation of the student's health outcomes?

## Key terminology explained:

**Nursing Delegation**—“An intervention/strategy that requires practice to develop competency. It requires the school nurse to assign performance of a specific nursing task, in a specific situation, for a particular student to an unlicensed assistive personnel (UAP). Nursing delegation requires the school nurse to provide for the training and ongoing supervision of the UAP and evaluation of the student’s health outcomes. Nursing tasks can be delegated, but not the nursing process. Nursing delegation requires knowledge of state-specific legal parameters of both nursing delegation and scope of practice for licensed practice nurse or licensed vocational nurse.”<sup>3</sup>

**Unlicensed Assistive Personnel (UAP)**—A person who accepts the task of assisting the licensed nurse by performing a specific nursing task, in a specific situation, for a specific student, that is allowable in that state jurisdiction. In the school environment, this may include a paraprofessional, a teacher, a teacher’s assistant, a secretary, a health room assistant, a coach, or other persons. The school nurse is responsible for documenting the training and ongoing supervision of the UAP. A UAP may not perform the nursing process (i.e., clinical reasoning, nursing judgment, critical thinking).<sup>2-6</sup>

## References:

- <sup>1</sup>National Association of School Nurses. (2016). *Framework for 21st century school nursing practice*<sup>TM</sup>. <https://www.nasn.org/nasn/nasn-resources/professional-topics/framework>
- <sup>2</sup>National Association of School Nurses. (2019). *Nursing delegation in the school setting* (Position Statement). <https://www.nasn.org/advocacy/professional-practice-documents/position-statements/ps-delegation>
- <sup>3</sup>National Association of School Nurses. (2020). Framework for 21st Century School Nursing Practice<sup>TM</sup> - Clarifications and updated definitions. *NASN SchoolNurse*, 35(4), 225-133.doi: 10.1177/1942602X20928372
- <sup>4</sup>American Nurses Association. (2012). *Principles for delegation by registered nurses to unlicensed assistive personnel* (UAP). <https://www.nursingworld.org/globalassets/docs/ana/ethics/principlesofdelegation.pdf>
- <sup>5</sup>National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2019, April 29). *National guidelines for nursing delegation* (Position Paper). [https://www.ncsbn.org/NGND-PosPaper\\_06.pdf](https://www.ncsbn.org/NGND-PosPaper_06.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup>National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2016). National guidelines for nursing delegation. *Journal of Nursing Regulation*, 7(1), 5-14. [https://www.ncsbn.org/NCBSN\\_Delegation\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://www.ncsbn.org/NCBSN_Delegation_Guidelines.pdf)