



clean environment, healthy children, better education

State Superintendent Christopher Koch
100 N. 1st St.
Springfield, IL 62777

Dear Superintendent Koch:

We encourage the State to fund a State School Nurse Consultant at the Illinois State Board of Education to better support school nursing and, ultimately, student health. Currently there is a lack of organization and support for school nurses at the state level. A State School Nurse Consultant is integral to the proper coordination of school nurse certification programs, dissemination of information on infectious disease outbreaks, and communication amongst parents and school nurses across Illinois.

This position was cut seven years ago due to budget constraints. Since then, Victoria Jackson, the school nurse health consultant at the Department of Human Services, has devoted approximately 40 percent of her time to addressing school health and nursing issues. Nonetheless, she admits that she does not have enough time to provide the level of consultation needed. Ms. Jackson has plans of retiring in the next year. When this happens, there will be an enormous gap in health services consultation provided to Illinois schools with no guarantee that someone at DHS, or any other agency, will assume these responsibilities.

Currently schools individually search for answers to questions about health and wellness management. A state-level consultant at ISBE could readily communicate with Regional Offices of Education and local school administrators. This would provide a consistent, accurate and efficient approach, resulting in better services for students and reduced legal costs and liability for schools.

Why does Illinois need a state School Nurse Consultant?

1) Better school nurses mean healthier students.

With the increased focus on health and wellness in schools, an SNC at ISBE would take a lead in collecting health and wellness data in order to implement evidence-based health programs in Illinois schools. Currently there are no state-level efforts to evaluate and implement health programs for our student population.

2) A SNC will ensure supportive health services are provided in Illinois schools.

One of our state priorities is to provide affordable health care for all children. By ensuring quality school nursing services we can make sure that schools offer quality care while reducing student need for our thinly stretched emergency and critical care systems.

3) Health and student success are connected.

Students must be healthy to learn and succeed. Research has shown that school districts with adequate school nursing coverage have lower rates of absenteeism and higher test scores, advancing efforts to fulfill federal requirements. A SNC will help schools throughout Illinois implement evidence-based programs to support student health and success.

The attached document outlines the responsibilities and qualifications of the state School Nurse Consultant position.

Again, we urge you to fund a State School Nurse Consultant at the Illinois State Board of Education to better support school nursing and, ultimately, student health. We look forward to learning about your action on this issue and continuing to collaborate with you to provide healthy schools for all children.

Sincerely,

Mark Bishop
Deputy Director

cc: Jesse Ruiz; Christopher Ward; Vinni Hall; Andrea Brown; Dean Clark; David Fields; Edward Geppert;
Brenda Holmes; Joyce Karon

