

Statement Regarding Role of the School Nurse with Children Who Have Specific Health Care Needs and Funding of These Services:

P.L. 94-142 mandates that all handicapped children be provided an education in the least restrictive environment and that the special health care needs of these children shall be met. The Louisiana State Board of Nursing has been apprised of the increasing number of students in educational settings requiring specialized nursing care while in attendance at school.

School nurses (presumably registered nurses) are responsible for assessing human responses to actual or potential health problems of the students and for developing an individualized nursing care plan to meet the needs identified through the assessment. The performance of specific nursing functions may be delegated by the school nurse to teachers and teachers' aides in accord with the Nurse Practice Act and the administrative rules on the delegation of nursing functions (LRS 37:913 (3) (c) and LAC 46:XLVII.3703.A.12).

The above-referenced section of the Nurse Practice Act provides for the registered nurse to delegate selected nursing functions approved by the Board of Nursing, with certain provisos: the attending physician does not object to the delegation; and the registered nurse must be physically present where delegated functions are performed, when such presence is necessary to assure that the care provided is of the same quality as provided by the registered nurse.

The above-referenced rules provide that the registered nurse may delegate to licensed practical nurses the major part of the nursing care needed by individuals in stable situations. In complex situations, selected tasks may be delegated to licensed practical nurses. Only non-complex tasks may be delegated to unlicensed persons. (The terms "stable situation", "complex task" and "non-complex task" are defined in the rules.)

The decision to delegate a specific nursing function requires nursing judgment to evaluate the student's health status, the competency of the person to whom the nursing function will be delegated, and the degree of supervision necessary during the performance of the nursing function. The registered nurse is mandated to utilize and document the nursing process specified in the Legal Standards of Nursing Practice (LAC 46:XLVII.3901-3913). Accountability for the total nursing care of the student rests with the registered nurse.

The Board of Nursing recognizes that meeting the nursing care needs of handicapped students at the level of safety and minimal effectiveness, as required by the statute and administrative rules governing nursing practice, will require budgetary commitment beyond the present level. The Board also is cognizant of the current limited fiscal resources in Louisiana. However, if the total educational system in Louisiana is to be upgraded, the needs of students with special health care needs cannot be ignored. To do so not only denies the handicapped student the full advantage of education; it also places added burdens on the teachers, distracting them from their teaching responsibilities.