

New Jersey Department of Education

State School Nurse Consultant Annual Report

July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024
100 River View Plaza, P.O. Box 500
Trenton, NJ 08625

Kevin Dehmer, Commissioner

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Background

P.L. 2020, Chapter 85, was enacted on September 14, 2020. This legislation supplemented chapter 4 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes, establishing the position of State School Nurse Consultant in the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE). The focus of the State School Nurse Consultant is to facilitate best practices in school nursing by advancing comprehensive school health services and acting as a liaison in matters related to comprehensive school health services that addresses the health and wellness of all students while supporting school nursing practice. This includes program improvement, monitoring, synthesizing, and disseminating relevant information associated with changes in health and medical care, school nursing practice, legislation, and legal issues that impact health related issues in schools.

The State School Nurse Consultant is directly supervised by the Director of the Office of Student Support Services. Pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), the State School Nurse Consultant shall report annually to the Governor and to the Legislature. This report shall include a summary of the activities during the year, and any specific recommendations deemed appropriate and necessary concerning school nursing and comprehensive school health service programs. This report is intended to meet that requirement.

Roles and Responsibilities

The role and responsibilities of the State School Nurse Consultant, as established by legislation and statute, include the following:

1. Serve as a liaison and resource expert in school nursing and comprehensive school health services for county, state, and national school health organizations, and policy setting groups.
2. Provide consultation and technical assistance to support school districts in facilitating parent and community engagement.
3. Coordinate school health program activities with public health, social services, environmental and educational agencies, and other public and private entities.
4. Monitor, interpret, synthesize, and disseminate relevant information associated with changes in health and medical care, school nursing practice, legislation, and legal issues that impact schools.
5. Facilitate the development of policies, standards, and guidelines to enhance comprehensive school health services.
6. Foster and promote professional development for school nurses, which may include planning, coordinating, or providing educational guidance, and networking with universities and other providers of continuing education to meet identified needs.

7. Promote quality assurance of comprehensive school health services by advocating for evidence-based school nursing practice and participating in the National Association of School Nurses data collection initiatives.
8. Participate in state-level public interagency partnerships and private partnerships with statewide stakeholders to foster comprehensive school health services, representing school nurses in multi-disciplinary collaborations.
9. Initiate, participate in, and utilize research studies related to comprehensive school health services, the health needs of children and youth, school nursing practice, and related issues.
10. Serve as a liaison regarding school health issues with the Department of Health and the Legislature.

Summary of Services

Services performed reflect the roles and responsibilities for the position and are categorized as: Resource Development, Stakeholder Support, and Interagency Collaboration. Although services and projects are categorized there is an overlap of services, therefore they are not mutually exclusive.

Resource Development

Resource development includes the facilitation and development of policies, standards, and guidelines to enhance comprehensive school health services. It also includes the monitoring, interpretation, synthesis, and dissemination of relevant information associated with changes in school nursing practice. While serving as a liaison and resource expert in school nursing and comprehensive school nursing services the following work was performed:

- The release of the updated Model Policy and Guidance on the Prevention and Treatment of Sports-Related Head Injuries and Concussions.
- The release of the updated Sports-Related Concussion and Head Injury Fact Sheet and Parent/Guardian Acknowledgement Form.
- Links and resources posted on the School Health Services website were updated to include the most current and relevant information and resources. Inactive links and outdated information were removed.
- Implemented the use of the updated Preparticipation Physical Exam (PPE) Forms commonly known as sports physical forms.
- The implementation process for the updated PPE Forms included a broadcast memo explaining the changes and updating the frequently asked questions (FAQ's) on the NJDOE website.

- A Model Policy and Guidance for Districts on Self-Administration of Medication and Delegation of Hydrocortisone Sodium Succinate for Students with Adrenal Insufficiency has been developed. The release of this guidance document is pending.
- Several initiatives and guidance documents are pending:
 - Updated Model Policy and Guidance for Managing Allergies and Anaphylaxis at School Including Training Protocols for the Administration of Epinephrine.
 - Exemplar Nursing Services Plan

Stakeholder Support

The State School Nurse Consultant serves as a liaison between the Department of Education and the Department of Health regarding school health issues. This includes serving as a resource and support that grows professional knowledge and provides guidance. During this period, the State School Nurse Consultant attended professional workshops, presented at conferences or meetings, and responded to inquiries related to student health services. Stakeholder support took place through the dissemination of updates and relevant information via NJDOE's Broadcast Memos, responses to email inquiries and presentations associated with changes in school nursing practice.

Inquiries

The number of inquiries to the healthyschools@doe.nj.gov email has increased significantly since last year. The position was filled for 7 months during the 2022-2023 year. Data for the 2023-2024 year encompasses a 12-month period.

There were a total of 418 inquiries from July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024. There were 112 inquiries related specifically to the updated PPE Forms and 306 general inquiries. While most inquiries were generated by school nurses, the data shows that other stakeholders, including parents, school personnel and outside agencies utilize the healthyschools@doe.nj.gov email as a resource.

Figure 1: Total Inquiries

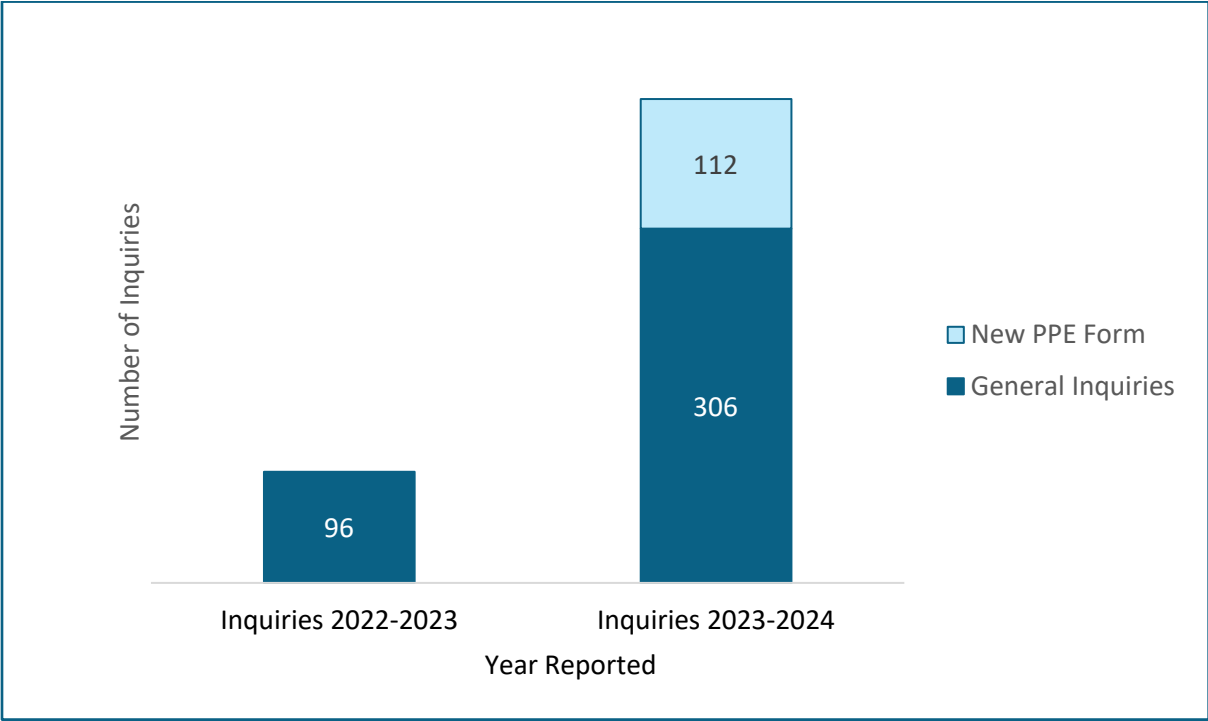


Table 1: Inquiry by Source

Source of Inquiry	Number of Inquiries	Percentage of Total Inquiries
School Nurse	188	61.4%
School Administrator	29	9.5%
New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH)	22	7.1%
Other	22	7.1%
New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE)	12	3.9%
Other School Personnel	9	2.95%
Unidentified	9	2.95%
Parent/Guardian	7	2.3%
Physician	5	1.6%
New Jersey State School Nurse Association (NJSSNA)	2	0.66%
Division of Children and Families	1	0.33%
Total	306	n/a

As described in Table 1, a significant number of inquiries resulted from updates to the PPE Form.

Table 2 describes the source of inquiries specifically related to the PPE Form.

Table 2: Inquiries by Source (PPE Form)

Source of Inquiry	Number of Inquiries	Percentage of Total Inquiries
School Nurse	68	61%
Athletic Department	18	17%
Unknown	8	7%
Healthcare Provider	7	6%
Administrator	5	4%
Physician Office	5	4%
Athletic Trainers Association	1	<1%
Total	112	n/a

Meetings and Presentations

- Presented to Somerset County School Nurse Association, Gloucester County School Nurse Association and Flemington-Raritan School District.
- The New Jersey State School Nurse Association (NJSSNA) is a key stakeholder and collaborator in addressing questions or concerns related to school health services. Regular meetings and communications were established to help address school nurse practice concerns.
- The implementation of the updated PPE forms triggered an increased number of inquiries. Clarification regarding the updated forms and guidance regarding implementation was provided via response to email inquiries, updates to the NJDOE school health services website, and a special meeting with NJSSNA members.
- Attended the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) meetings and webinars to support and participate in the NASN data collection initiatives as per job requirements.

NJDOE Broadcast Memos

- [Updated Concussion Protocols and Guidance](#)
- [Updated Guidance on Working Papers](#)
- [Updated Summary of Selected School Health Mandates](#)
- [Delegation of Medication Administration in School Settings](#)

- [Implementing access to Free Menstrual Products in Public Schools for Students in Grades Six through Twelve](#)
- [Updated Tuberculosis \(TB\) Guidance](#)
- [Update Preparticipation Physical Evaluation Form](#)

Interagency Collaboration

The State School Nurse Consultant serves as a liaison and resource expert in school nursing and comprehensive school health services for county, state, and national school health organizations, and policy setting groups. This requires participation in both public interagency partnerships and private partnerships with stakeholders to foster comprehensive school health services while representing school nurses in multi-disciplinary collaborations. The State School Nurse Consultant promotes quality assurance of comprehensive school health services by advocating for the use of evidence-based school nursing practices and participating in the National Association of School Nurses data collection initiatives.

The following work was accomplished during this reporting period.

1. Collaborated with the New Jersey Department of Health

Collaborated with the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) on the following projects:

- Provided input and consultation on the HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filter distribution program — ensuring information was shared with local educational agencies (LEAs) via broadcast memos, and individual outreach.
- Attended and participated in monthly meetings with the New Jersey Leadership Exchange for Adolescent Health Promotion (NJ LEAHP) team. Attended quarterly meetings with NJ LEAHP to support cross-state collaboration. NJ LEAHP is a collaborative of multi-sector, state-level leadership teams with the goal to develop state-specific action plans in support of policy assessment, development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation to address adolescent health in three priority areas: sexual health education, sexual health services, and safe and supportive environments emphasizing school and family relationships that can reduce the risk for sexually transmitted infections (STI's) and unintended pregnancy.
- Ensured information regarding required Surveillance for Infectious Conditions (SIC) was transmitted to LEA's and posted on the NJDOE website.
- Disseminated updated links and guidance addressing TB testing in schools as per the Division of HIV, STD, and TB Services within the NJDOH.
- Provided updated guidance regarding the translation of student immunization records.

- Participated in biweekly meetings with the NJDOH regarding New Jersey’s Communicable Disease Reporting and Surveillance System (CDRSS), which includes Surveillance for Infectious Conditions (SIC) Data.

2. Supported NASN Data Collection

Supported the NASN data collection initiative which required collaborative work with NASN and NJSSNA:

- Met with NJSSNA to discuss current data points and determined which data points could be identified via the school report card.
- Participated in meetings and webinars regarding the data collection with NASN.
- Gathered data available via the current reporting system established by the NJDOE.
- Public data including chronic absenteeism rates was shared as part of the NASN data collection initiative.

3. Performed Application and Program Review

Performed an application and program review of school nurse certification programs at the request of the NJDOE Office of Recruitment, Preparation, and Certification.

Report on 2022-2023 Recommendations

Table 3: Recommendations

Action	Status
Develop a standardized Nursing Services Plan (NSP).	In progress
Develop a System for reporting NSP data.	In progress
Collected data to address the school nurse shortage.	Completed
Adopted the updated version of the Pre-participation Physical Evaluation Form.	Completed
Review and update the Training Protocols for the Emergency Administration of Epinephrine written in 2008.	In progress
Review and update the <i>Guidelines for the Management of Life-Threatening Food Allergies in Schools</i> that were written in 2008.	In progress

School Nurse Data — Defining and Addressing School Nurse Shortages

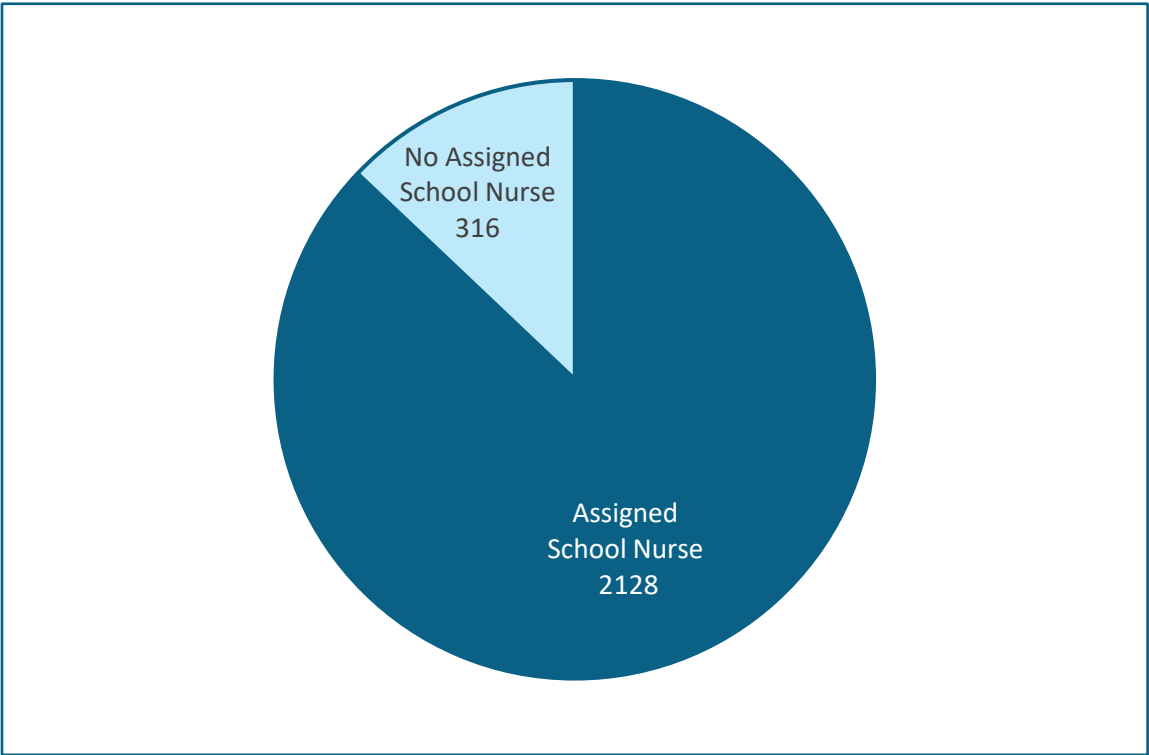
During the 2023-2024 school year, 2,749 school nurses were employed in New Jersey public schools.¹ NJDOE has updated the related NJ SMART reporting fields to improve data accuracy describing school nurse credentials, which may impact the number of school nurses reported in upcoming cycles.

New Jersey law requires every school district to employ a certified school nurse to provide nursing services while school is in session, as outlined in N.J.S.A. 18A:40-1 and 18A:40-3.3. Districts are allowed to supplement these services with non-certified nurses, but certain conditions must be met. Non-certified nurses must work under the supervision of a certified school nurse and be assigned to the same school building or complex. Their responsibilities are limited to those permitted under their license issued by the State Board of Nursing.

Only individuals holding an Educational Services Certificate with a school nurse endorsement from the State Board of Examiners may provide nursing services in public schools, except where statutes or regulations authorize specific health-related services by other personnel. To obtain the certification, individuals must hold a valid registered nurse (RN) license and meet all additional requirements set by the State Board of Examiners.

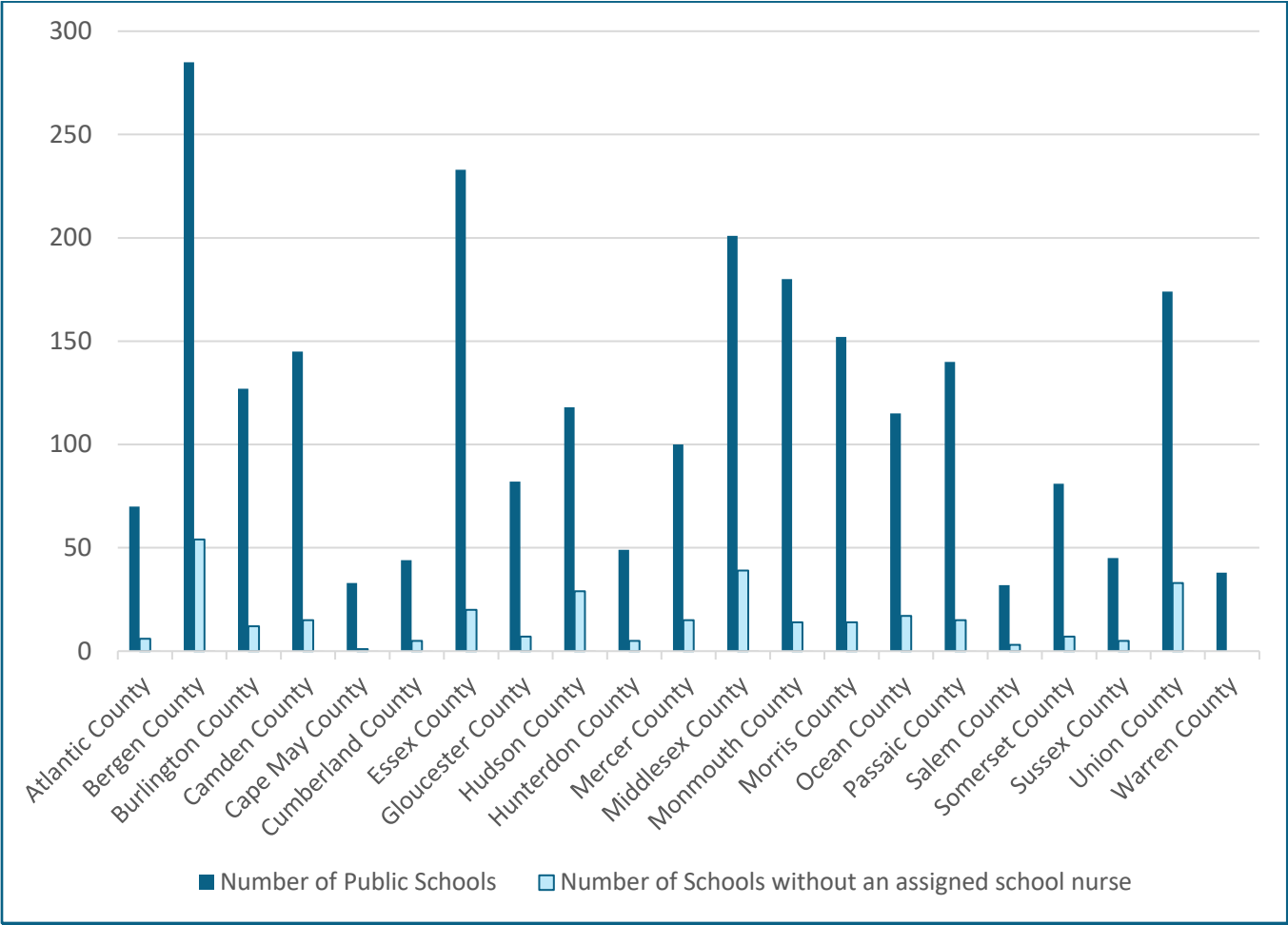
An examination of data reported by districts to the NJDOE revealed that 316 schools or 13% of schools within the State did not have a school nurse assigned during the 2023-2024 school year.

Figure 2: Number of New Jersey Public Schools (2023-24)



¹ This number may be inaccurate due to reporting inconsistencies.

Figure 3: Schools Without a Certificated Nurse 2023-24 School Year



The counties with the highest vacancy rate for school nurses are Bergen County, Hudson County, Mercer County, Middlesex County, Ocean County and Union County, all showing a vacancy rate greater than the average 13%.

Table 4: School Nurse Assignment per County (Data for Figure 3)

County	Number of public schools	Number of schools without an assigned school nurse	Percentage of schools without a certified school nurse
Atlantic County	70	6	8.60%
Bergen County	285	54	18.90%
Burlington County	127	12	9.40%
Camden County	145	15	10.30%
Cape May County	33	1	3%

County	Number of public schools	Number of schools without an assigned school nurse	Percentage of schools without a certified school nurse
Cumberland County	44	5	11.40%
Essex County	233	20	8.60%
Gloucester County	82	7	8.50%
Hudson County	118	29	24.60%
Hunterdon County	49	5	10%
Mercer County	100	15	15%
Middlesex County	201	39	19.40%
Monmouth County	180	14	7.70%
Morris County	152	14	9.20%
Ocean County	115	17	14.80%
Passaic County	140	15	10.70%
Salem County	32	3	9.40%
Somerset County	81	7	8.60%
Sussex County	45	5	11.10%
Union County	174	33	19%
Warren County	38	0	0%

Recommendations

1. Explore Needs Related to School-based Health Services

Barriers such as acute and chronic health conditions, food insecurity, housing instability, lack of access to healthcare including mental health care, and the effects of adverse childhood experiences are evident across all races and socioeconomic groups. School nurses are one of the protective factors within schools and are essential in supporting student health and wellness. Increasingly, students have complex health needs requiring nursing care within the school setting. School nurses support students by working with parents and staff to support health and education.

The New Jersey Department of Education, with the support of Governor Murphy, has worked to establish unprecedented access to mental health support and continues to invest in mental and

emotional health services for students by enhancing school-based mental health programs. New Jersey is increasing its workforce of school psychologists, school counselors, and school social workers. School nurses are part of the mental health support system within the school setting.

One strategy employed to increase access to school nurses was establishing a joint effort with the New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing (NJCCN) and the New Jersey State School Nurse Association. This partnership is working to address the unfilled positions of certified school nurses.

Another potential strategy to help increase the availability of school health services is to explore opportunities for expanding access to school nurse certification. Given that several institutions of higher education have discontinued their school nurse certification programs, the NJDOE is interested in better understanding the factors influencing these decisions and identifying ways to support ongoing program availability.

Lastly, the NJDOE will continue to analyze data to gain a deeper understanding of the staffing needs related to school nursing. This effort aims to inform the development of a strategic plan that aligns identified needs with available resources.

2. Encourage the Use of a Model Nursing Services Plan

Encourage the use of a model Nursing Services Plan including electronic submission of the form. Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1.3, “Nursing services plan” means a plan that describes in detail the nursing services to be provided throughout the school district based on the needs of its students, potential emergency situations, basic nursing services requirements, and the assignment of medical staff to provide the services. Students have complex health needs requiring nursing care within the school setting. School nursing involves more than technical and mechanical nursing skills. It also includes emergency preparedness, staff education, care coordination, supporting student health through health promotion and illness prevention. To effectively assess and promote quality assurance of comprehensive school health services, a standard assessment tool identifying the health needs of students and nursing services provided will be developed and encouraged by the NJDOE.

3. Continue to Provide Updates to Guidance Documents

Continue to provide updates to guidance documents such as:

- a. Model Policy and Guidance for Districts on Self-Administration of Medication and Delegation of Hydrocortisone Sodium Succinate for Students with Adrenal Insufficiency
- b. Guidelines for the Management of Life-Threatening Food Allergies in School.
- c. Guidelines for the Care of Students with Diabetes in the School Setting.