



*Supporting Health and Educational Success*

## **Oregon School Nurse to Student Ratio Improvement Initiative** **Oregon School Nurse Association**

**The Issue – Increasing Investment in School Nursing:** School nurses identify and treat health problems that affect learning by providing comprehensive case management, clinical triage, vision/dental/hearing screening, health management plans, one-to-one nursing for students with complex medical needs, health counseling and education, and enable students with disabilities to be educated with their peers. Just as important, they are very often the gateway to other medical services.

The health care services that school nurses deliver every day to students includes care that currently meets both the CCO Incentive and State Benchmark Measures. School nurses are contributing to, or directly delivering health care that is being measured and reimbursed to primary care providers by the State of Oregon.

In Oregon, school nurses serve 197 school districts with a combined enrollment of over 563,000 students. The ratio of school nurses who serve the general population of students in Oregon is 1:4,054 - far below the standard of 1:750 recommended, but not mandated, by the Oregon Legislature in 2009.

**Why there aren't more school nurses in Oregon:** School districts are unable to achieve the recommended ratio of school nurses because funding comes almost exclusively from the State School Fund. Reliance on the State School Fund, without complementary sources from health care dollars, means that schools cannot redirect those education dollars to increase school nursing services to recommended levels.

### **Benefits from reaching Oregon's recommended school nurse/student ratio:**

- When there is no registered nurse on the school premises, the responsibility to administer the necessary medications and treatments, and appropriate monitoring of children's health issues, fall on the shoulders of administrators, educators, and staff who are ill-prepared to perform these tasks.
- Increasing Oregon's school nurse workforce will help to lessen the gaps that exist in providing access to quality health care for our state's students.
- Today's students face more medically complex conditions and chronic health illnesses – including asthma, diabetes, food allergies, obesity and mental health and behavioral issues – which require the knowledge, assessment skills and judgment of a school nurse to provide management of these lifelong conditions.
- The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) recommends investing in school nursing as an important approach to health care reform. School nurses are the gateway and connection to other medical services for students and families leading to higher quality healthcare at a lower price meeting the Triple Aim.

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- School nurses coordinate with families, schools and providers to connect children to medical homes, which can help improve health outcomes and reduce costs.
- School nurses promote wellness and disease prevention and perform early intervention services, such as periodic assessments for vision, hearing and dental problems, to reduce barriers to learning and address health disparities.

### **The School Nurse to Student Ratio Improvement Initiative supports the goals of Oregon's Healthy Kids Learn Better Coalition:**

1) Coordination: Ensure that partnership and coordination between education and health are included at both state and local levels.

2) Healthy Environment and Workplace: Provide support for students and school personnel to practice and model healthy behaviors.

3) Data Collection and Analysis: Include indicators of student health and wellness as a measure of student achievement.

4) Access: Assure onsite access to health services in every school to support learning readiness.

### **Phase 1: Goals of the School Nurse to Student Ratio Improvement Initiative**

- Enact legislation in 2015 to phase in mandated school nursing in every Oregon school district using health care funding, not additional educational dollars.
- Establish the position of State School Nurse Consultant in the Office of School and Adolescent Health in the Oregon Health Authority.
- Implement standards of practice for Oregon that include outcome measures related to health transformation and academic performance (this will require an appointed task force).
- Develop a statewide infrastructure among health care and education providers that will support all forms of school health services.

### **Long Term Goals of OSNA's collaborative legislative agenda:**

- Foster and promote a non-competitive, collaborative strategy that directs an appropriate level of funding to both school nursing and school-based health centers.
- Achieve the school nurse/student ratio enacted by the Oregon Legislature in 2009 by diversifying funding sources for school nursing in Oregon with a dedicated revenue stream

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from Oregon's health care system.

- Fund, develop and implement a "Whole Child" model of school health in Oregon.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1kURnZXsd0&feature=youtu.be>
- To ensure a balanced funding mechanism between health and education to support school nursing.

**The School Nurse to Student Ratio Improvement Initiative is working with these partners who share a common interest in a Coordinated School Health System:**

Oregon Health Authority/Public Health Division  
Oregon School-Based Health Alliance  
Healthy Kids Learn Better Coalition  
Oregon Nurses Association  
Multnomah County Health Department

Multnomah Education Service District  
Oregon Education Association  
CCOs: Family Care Inc.; Health Share Oregon  
Oregon School Nurses Association

