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NEWS RELEASE



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**THE AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION ADVOCATES FOR DAILY
AVAILABILITY OF SCHOOL NURSES FOR NATION'S CHILDREN**

SILVER SPRING, MD – The American Nurses Association (ANA) recommends the assignment and daily availability of school nurses in educational settings to address the safety and health care needs of the nation's children. Students' health and health needs must be addressed in schools to achieve optimum learning, and registered nurses, at a ratio of one for every 750 students, are essential in promoting health, preventing injury, and providing direct health care services to school students to achieve a safe and healthy learning environment.

"Children should be healthy to learn, and learn to be healthy," said ANA President Rebecca M. Patton, MSN, RN, CNOR. "School nurses play a fundamental role in teaching students how to improve their overall health, and reduce unhealthy behaviors. School nurses serve to optimize a student's health, safety, and capacity for learning.

A growing body of research emphasizes the positive effect of children's good health on academic potential, and specifically, the positive link between school nurse availability and student attendance and academic performance. The *Journal of School Health* published a 2004 study that associated school nurse involvement with positive influences on health and disease management. The *Journal of School Nursing* and the *American School Board Journal* each published studies which showed a correlation between facilities with a full time nurse and better school performance and attendance.

The prevalence and complexity of children's health problems affect every US classroom, with the US Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) reporting that roughly 20 million of the nation's children suffering from at least one chronic health problem. It is essential that the school nurse have the professional knowledge and the skill to manage and provide a full range of health services in educational settings. While the school nurse provides direct health care to students in emergent situations, she or he also must manage the **MORE...**

collaborative care of chronic health conditions, as well as acute injury and illness. In addition, the school nurse provides the leadership, management and health planning knowledge and experience to pursue many additional responsibilities. These include, but are not limited to, health education and promotion, screening and referrals for health conditions, monitoring and counseling students for a variety of physical and psychological conditions or problems, the development and evaluation of school health programs and policies, field trip planning, assessing and monitoring the school environment for health hazards, as well as assisting with emergency and disaster planning and preparedness.

ANA believes that successful health planning requires the cooperation and participation of healthcare professionals, teachers, school administrators and staff along with students, families and their communities. As part of that collaborative school health model, and to assure children's safety, ANA believes that other responsible people in the school setting should be trained and drilled in various health care protocols, under the direction of the school nurse. The lack of a school nurse on the premises should never hinder the school's ability to respond to emergencies and urgent situations; either by telephone or through well-rehearsed protocols, the school nurse can assist others in providing the high quality care that all school children deserve.

On any given weekday, as much as 20% of the combined US population of children and adults can be found in schools. ANA strongly believes that public policy must guarantee a central health care professional – educated, knowledgeable and with up-to-date skills – to be available daily to students in the educational setting, to best protect the fundamental public health and educational priority our nation's children represent. That professional is the registered school nurse.

For more information about ANA's position on school nurses and children's health and safety in schools, please go to <http://www.nursingworld.org/readroom/position/practice/AssuringSafeHealthCarePreK.pdf>

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The ANA is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 2.9 million registered nurses through its 54 constituent member nurses associations. The ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.