



School Nurses: Skills, roles & qualities

Introduction

In today's multicultural society, we face health problems and different changing interpretations of illnesses and health concepts. These varying concepts have an impact on children's life, and in many cases, it is difficult to address certain topics. For this reason, the school, as a means of socialization and, being an important part of children lives, becomes in the ideal place where nurses can work promoting and implementing a healthier life and environment, having a positive impact on the members of the school community.

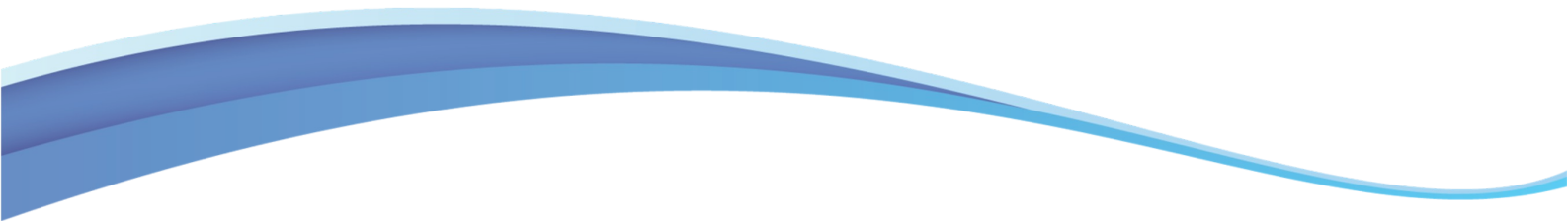
Nowadays, children and teenagers have very unique health needs, which are hard to understand by parents and teachers, without the support and assistance of health professionals, such as school nurses.

The Catalan Association of Nursing and School Health (ACISE in Spanish), follows as guidelines, the nursing roles and school health established on the professional profile of school nurses, agreed at the Spanish State level in Gandía on 10/30/2009 during the II National Congress of Nursing and School Health.

At ACISE, we have expanded our goals, with the addition of new roles agreed by different international school nursing associations, in order to improve our work on preventing and promoting health and, to take care of children's illnesses at school in a better and proper way.

School nurses are experienced health professionals, highly qualified to educate on health promotion to children and adolescents, as well as, to guard and take care of the entire school community. By their training and experience, school nurses have the right the profile to fully develop the different roles stated and, have the skills needed to provide health services within schools and, the social and family environments.

The objectives of school nurses go beyond of taking care, as nurses should also work on preventing and promoting health focused on children and teenagers at school, taking into consideration the members of the school community (parents, teachers, parent associations) as well as, the social environment to which it belongs. Thus, school nursing short-term objective, is to achieve an optimal health state for every student, and to self-empower them on health care, so they would look after themselves during their adulthood.



Professional skills and competencies

School nurses should be qualified and have experience in their field. They should meet specific skills and competencies that make them appropriate for the job and to provide a high quality health service.

- Experience on clinical practice.
- knowledge on health promotion concepts.
- To be able to provide and coordinate comprehensive care to children.
- Domain on therapeutic practice.
- Have good communicative skills (oral and written) and body language (gestures).
- Be aware of the new technologies.
- Be familiar with problem solving strategies.
- Have the ability to acquire knowledge and share learnings through teaching.
- Be able to lead and coordinate actions following the health framework.
- Have sense of commitment, respect, honesty and safety.
- Follow bioethic standards.
- Respect anthropological differences (multiculturalism) without making judgements.
- To know and be aware of teaching methods and approaches.
- Be familiar with research methods and their execution.
- Ability to plan , implement and evaluate



School nurses qualities and the rationale for having one in every school

As complement to the skills and competencies mentioned, each school nurse has to meet a series of qualities. These features, support the reasons why it is crucial to have a school nurse in every school.

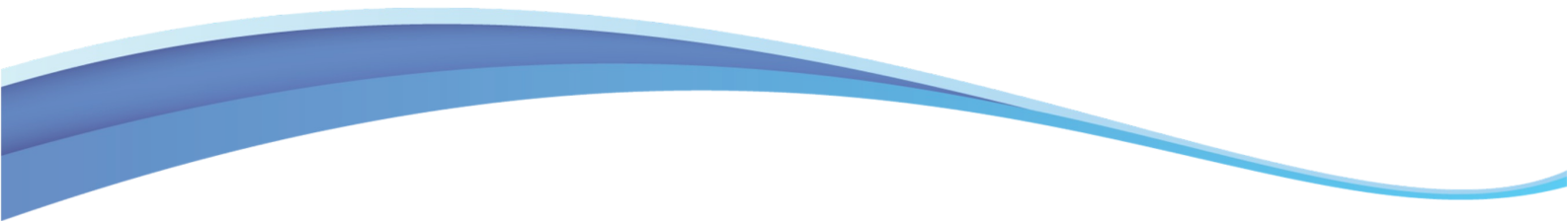
- Nurses develop a multidimensional role.
- Are trained to educate and promote health to children and teens (ICN).
- Are able to guard and take care of the entire school community, within the school and, the social-family environment.
- Understand the role to be developed in today's multicultural society.
- Have a full perception of this changing society, as well as how health problems, concepts and interpretations change everyday and, their impact on children and adolescents.
- Promote social interactions inside and outside the school.
- Understand children and teenagers.
- Provide care and assistance to children with fragile health.
- Provide care and assistance to children at risk of social exclusion.
- Research on the knowledge of children and adolescents' health at school.



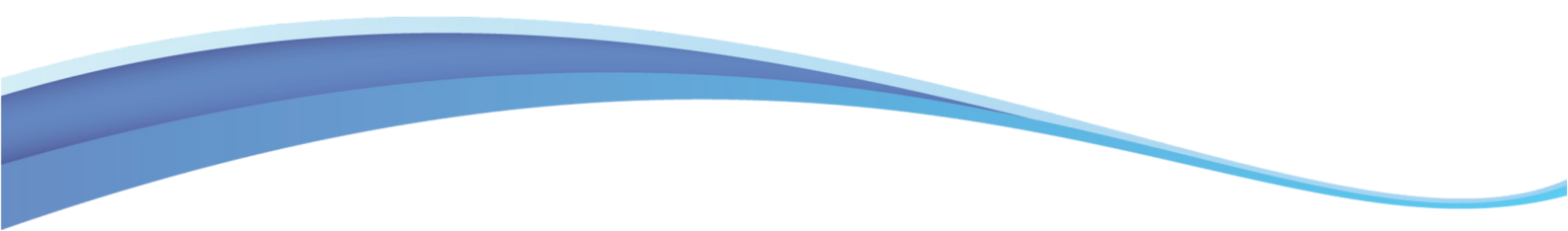
The roles of the school nurse

As mentioned before, school nurses play an important part during children's school life. Therefore, there are important roles which every nurse should know and play while developing their job.

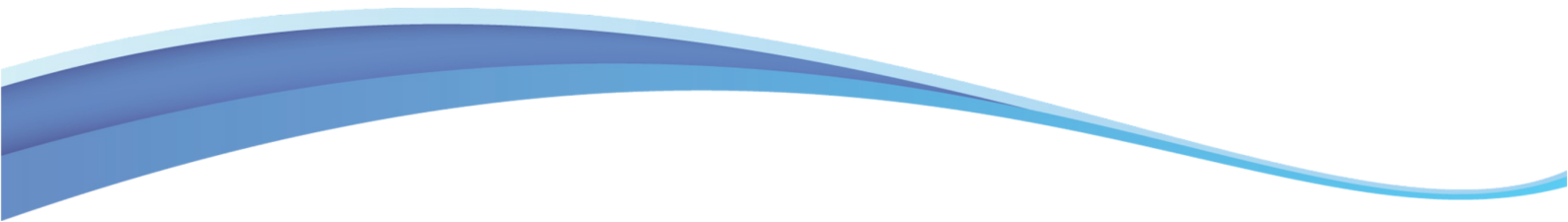
Care provider role

- Identify and evaluate the school health needs.
 - To organize and design health action plans based on the needs of the school community.
 - Manage the treatments and medications prescribed by medical professionals prior written authorization.
 - Provide care coverage to emergencies and health issues that occur during school hours, during the activities carried out inside or outside the centre.
 - Follow scientifically validated protocols.
 - Determine when it's necessary to take students to the emergency room, a health care centre or take them home (informing the parents about the situation).
 - Treat those children who need a special daily attention, to facilitate their integration into state schools. For students attending special education schools, the goal is to improve the attention they already receive.
 - Control and monitor students affected by chronic and severe illnesses, by building a network along with the families, teachers and other health professionals workers involved in the school community.
 - To Prevent, detect and follow-up of the different health problems that occur during primary and secondary education.
- 

- Advise the parents, the school or other appropriate health professionals when students need a more specialized care.
- Work along with the school board, psychologists, educational psychologists and other responsible professionals of students physical and mental health.
- Become part of an interdisciplinary team and collaborate with the school community and the school board, sharing health expertise.
- Design, implement and evaluate specific protocols and action guidelines for nursing practice in schools.
- Conduct official school health surveys in every school.
- Supervise the balance of the menus offered in the cafeteria.
- Monitor hygiene standards before and after meals.
- Evaluate (every month) the food quality and suitability for students who require special meals.
- Create a ***School Health Record*** for every student.
- Monitor and register health problems on a daily basis.
- Keep school health records confidential, due to the importance of the information listed on each one, such as: medical and nursing diagnosis, immunization records, health rating scales, allergies, medication, medical authorizations and recommendations regarding the health of each student.
- Keep the medicine cabinet and the first-aid kit up to date (check expiration dates of drugs, have all the necessary materials for treatments and interventions).
- Be responsible of keeping in optimal conditions the nurse's office.
- Provide medical treatments supported by medical orders and parents' authorization to those children with chronic illnesses.
- Take part in accident prevention plans, as well as interventions to minimize the risk of accidents at school.



Educator and health promoter role

- To promote health at the school community, focused on students and considering their environment and anthropological background.
 - Through health education, support and promote, students' health empowerment.
 - Apply health educational programs, fair and equal for everyone, from childhood to adolescence, providing continuity and training in self-care and well-being.
 - Design classroom materials to cover and develop the topics in the health education programme.
 - Bear in mind students' needs according to their age, and take into consideration, the specific characteristics of each school community and social environment.
 - Plan health educational and formative activities, aimed to the whole school community, considering teaching methodologies and scientific accuracy.
 - Create and provide an information sheet, to inform and advise the school community about the most common childhood illnesses and diseases, as well as, how to prevent them.
 - Elaborate a “healthy habits” training program for parents, imparting crucial information about self-care and health prevention during childhood and adolescence.
 - Cooperate with the teaching staff and the school board, to fully integrate health education as a compulsory school subject or, to integrate it into an existing subject, such as social science or physical education.
 - Plan the educational interventions throughout the school year and the corresponding school year assessments, to improve and adapt the programme according to the needs of the school community.
- 

Researcher role

- Do research on school nursing at a national and international level.
- Get data about children and adolescents risky behaviours, healthy habits and health needs through research, in order to adapt and improve the job done by the nurse.
- Search and evaluate the application of health educational programmes.
- Collaborate with health and school nursing searching teams.
- Promote training and research.
- Get data about chronically ill children at school, to get to know their needs.
- Evaluate the level of satisfaction regarding the school nursing services.
- Make a meeting plan in coordination with other school nurses and teachers, to energize and improve individual and group performance with students.
- Develop a health intervention protocol for schools.
- Generate materials and protocols for health promoting at school.
- Research on children with social exclusion and the impact on their health.
- Share findings and results with state and public schools and, the general public.
- To participate in seminars and conferences.
- Publish articles related to school nursing, in order to boost the school nurses work and their impact on improving the health conditions, illness treatments and health care provided to children and adolescents.



Planner, manager and coordinator role

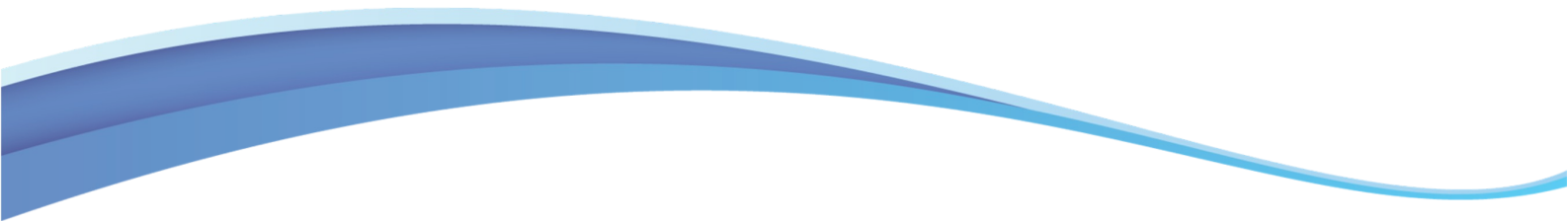
- Manage the training and health care services given at school.
- Organize meetings with non-governmental organizations and create new bonds, in favour of students' health.
- Facilitate and manage health interventions in every school, in order to improve the school community's health.
- Work in coordination with other health agents and professionals involved in students' health-care.
- Administer the economic aids to improve health services in the school community.
- Manage the implementation of health protocols, adapting them to the needs of each school, evaluating and improving them to give continuity to its application at school.
- Plan, record, monitor and store medical records, ensuring confidentiality based on the data protection law enforcement of each country or community.
- Establish and manage the guidelines to be followed by school nurses, in coordination with the corresponding health entities.
- Monitor and evaluate the nurses' performance.



Healthcare consultant and advisor role

- Advise public and private entities, on the use of applicable health guidelines and protocols, covering topics related to health education, health promotion, prevention of risky behaviours, accidents and illnesses.
- Advise families about their children's health, during individual or group meetings.
- Advise the school community (parents, guardians, teachers and non-teaching personnel) on health related topics.
- Advise teachers, parents, guardians (tutors) and parent associations on new health protocols, health outbreaks or any other health problem at school.

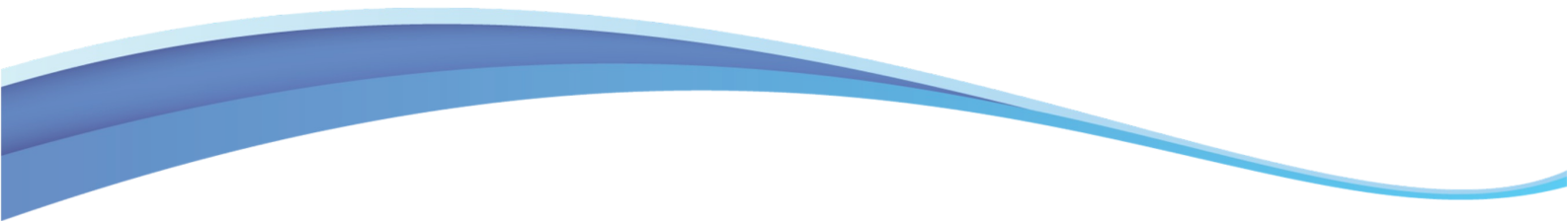
Assistance role

- Assist children and adolescents who start at school for the first time and, at the beginning of the school year.
 - Assist the integration of absent children, who have been away for long periods of time due to illnesses.
 - Assist the integration of children with rare illnesses and diseases, as well as children with poor health or suffering of mental or physical deficiencies.
 - Assist parents on their children's health, how to take care of them on health or sickness.
 - Assist children during grieving processes.
 - Assist children who suffer from the break-up of their parents.
 - Assist teachers towards the integration of children with rare illnesses.
 - Assist day-care assistants.
 - Assist the integration of refugees and immigrants to the school nursing programme.
- 

Social role

- Foster the liaison between school – health – family.
- Detect risk situations of social exclusion, due to poverty, marginalization, broken families or any other situation.
- Prompt a closer relationship and integration between the school and the community around it.
- Have into account the anthropological characteristics of the population (culture, customs, religion, ethnicity ...) and work alongside the school, for the integration of each student in their social environment.
- Collaborate and participate with local entities and organizations, to improve health on the school community.
- Work alongside other health professionals: psychologists, social workers, educational psychologists and community workers.

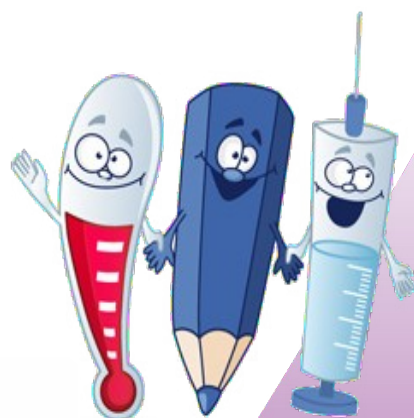
Monitor role (detection and vigilance)

- Detect possible contagious diseases and epidemics; be familiar with the corresponding protocols.
 - Monitor the compliance of programme by the students.
 - Detect poor healthy habits regarding hygiene, diets, resting, sleeping habits, leisure ...
 - Detect growth irregularities.
 - Detect and control illnesses symptoms.
 - Detect individual and collective risk behaviours, such as: alcohol and drug use, tobacco consumption or unhealthy dietary behaviours.
- 

- Detect possible mistreatments in childhood and adolescence.
- Detect and control possible disorders and mental illness.
- Detect violence cases and bad behaviour in children and adolescents.
- Detect sexual risk behaviours (STDs, unintended pregnancies, sexual violence ...)
- Detect students' emotional concerns.
- Detect harmful and unhealthy habits (anorexia, bulimia ...)
- Detect and monitor cases of bullying, cyberbullying, sexting, grooming...
- Monitor the compliance of environmental measures at school.
- Guard the compliance of hygiene and safety standards at school.

“No school without nurse”





ACISE

Catalan Association of Nursing and School Health

2016