

Delegation of nursing tasks in Utah schools

All students attending public schools must have access to healthcare during the school day and for extracurricular school activities so they can participate fully in the program. The federal laws that address this include the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Since most schools in Utah do not have a full-time nurse in each school it is often necessary to delegate specific nursing tasks to unlicensed assistive personnel (UAP) so that children with special healthcare needs can attend school. Knowing when and how to delegate specific nursing tasks is essential for the school nurse. Only a professional nurse can delegate nursing care. Further, nursing delegation is not appropriate for all students, all nursing tasks, or all school settings (NASN, 2019). Tasks commonly performed by a parent or guardian at home take on a more complex dimension in the school setting. What appears to be a simple task is held to a much higher standard at school. Any health-related procedure in school requires medical orders, and licensed nurses are held to a higher standard than a parent would be for the same procedure (Resha, 2010).

The National Association of School Nurses states, "Nursing delegation in the school setting is the assignment by the school nurse – not a school administrator – to a competent unlicensed individual (also called unlicensed assistive personnel) of the performance of a selected nursing task in a selected situation for an individual student. The school nurse facilitates the UAP training, evaluation of the UAP competence, and provides for ongoing supervision of the UAP and evaluation of the student's health outcomes. The nursing process can never be delegated."

Delegation means to transfer to an unlicensed person the authority to perform a task that, according to generally-accepted industry standards or law, does not require a nursing assessment (R156-31b-102 SS 14,C).

Assessment, planning, evaluation, and nursing judgment cannot be delegated. Delegation is a student and situation specific activity in which the nurse must consider all components of the delegation process for each delegation decision.

References

National Association of School Nurses. (2024). *Nursing delegation in the school setting*. Retrieved from <https://www.nasn.org/nasn-resources/resources-by-topic/delegation>.

Resha, C. (2010). Delegation in the school setting: Is it a safe practice? *OJIN: The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*. 15(2).

Utah Nurse Practice Act (58-31b)

Utah Nurse Practice Act Rule (R156-31b)

Delegation decision-making tree

