

# Recommendations for School Nurse Staffing Utah 2022

During the 2022 Utah General Legislative Session, [House Bill 114](#) was passed which outlines recommendations for school nurse-to-students ratio. The law encourages having one school nurse for every 2,000 students, or in local education agencies (LEA) with fewer than 2,000 students, the ratio of school nurse-to-students recommended by the Utah Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). This document gives the DHHS recommendations for LEAs with less than 2,000 students. This law also included a definition of a school nurse, which is a registered nurse whose primary role is the care of a defined group of students enrolled in the public school system.

School nurse staffing must be determined at a level that provides for the student health, safety, and learning. In the past, ratios were used to determine staffing levels, with one registered nurse per 750 healthy students being recommended (Healthy People 2020). During the June 2017 meeting of the Board of Directors for the National Association of School Nurses, the following statement was written to standardize language regarding staffing: “To optimize student health, safety and learning, it is the position of the National Association of School Nursing that a professional registered school nurse be present in every school all day, every day.”

While this position is the ideal, it is not always reasonable. This may be the case in some rural schools with populations of less than 100 students. Additionally, some schools may need more than one full-time nurse, based on enrollment or health acuity needs.

Laws are in place to protect the right of all students to attend public school, including those with significant health needs. These laws include [The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 \(2000\)](#) and [Public Law 94-142](#), and the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (1975), reauthorized in 2004 as the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act \(IDEIA\) \(2004\)](#). A one-size-fits-all staffing determination is inadequate to fill the increasingly complex health needs of students and communities.

Staffing needs should be evaluated and determined at least annually, using student and community specific health data (NASN, 2020). The following factors must be considered when determining safe school nurse staffing levels in schools:

1. Student enrollment numbers; and
2. Social determinants of students and the community which include but are not limited to poverty, language barriers, education level, access to healthcare, safe housing, and transportation needs; and
3. Health disparities of students/community which include but are not limited to premature birth, race and ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and immigration status; and
4. Health acuity (see chart below) of students and the community.

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Based on the above criteria the DHHS recommends:

1. One full-time registered school nurse per school; or
2. Several full-time registered school nurses per school (for schools with high health acuity or social determinants of health and disparity needs); or
3. One full-time registered school nurse to no more than three schools (for schools with lower health acuity or social determinants of health and disparity needs).
4. LEAs with less than 2,000 students should make every attempt to meet the above recommendations. If this is not possible, then the following guidelines are recommended:

UDOH Recommended Staffing for LEAs with less than 2,000 Students			
LEA Size	Recommended FTE Registered School Nurse staff for LEAs with less than 2,000 students		
	One school nurse per 2,000 students	One school nurse per 750 students	Description
<500	0.1 – 0.25 FTE	0.1 - 0.7 FTE	Depending on health acuity or social determinants of health and disparities
500-1000	0.25 - 0.5 FTE	0.7 – 1.3 FTE	Depending on health acuity or social determinants of health and disparities
1000-1500	0.5 – 0.75 FTE	1.3 - 2.0 FTE	Depending on health acuity or social determinants of health and disparities
1500-2000	0.75 - 1.0 FTE	2.0 - 2.7 FTE	Depending on health acuity or social determinants of health and disparities

## References

Healthy People 2020 [Internet]. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Retrieved from <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/>

Individuals with Disability Education Improvement Act (2004), 20 U.S.C 1400 et seq. Retrieved from <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>

National Association of School Nurses. (2020). *School nurse workload* (Position Statement). Author. Retrieved from <https://www.nasn.org/nasn-resources/professional-practice-documents/position-statements/ps-workload>

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 E.S.C § 504. Retrieved from <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/civil-rights-center/statutes/section-504-rehabilitation-act-of-1973>