

## Supervision and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) in School Nursing, School Health Services

### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this document is to promote safe and high quality school health services that support positive student outcomes by addressing four issues related to the supervision and evaluation of school employees who are licensed healthcare clinicians:

1. Establish a common understanding of the terms “supervision” and “evaluation” as used by licensed healthcare clinicians
2. Provide guidance for administrators who supervise and evaluate employees who are licensed healthcare clinicians
3. Clarify the use of the title of *School Nurse*
4. Recommend tools to assist administrators to perform employee supervision and evaluation and tools to assist nurses who perform clinical evaluation and supervision of licensed healthcare clinicians.

### Rationale and Definitions

Confusion exist about the scope of practice and skill level for each designation of licensed healthcare clinician. Below is a list of the *basic* competencies for licensed healthcare providers in Vermont who begin entry level practice in nursing. The underline indicates content related to Agency of Education licensing endorsement:

- A *Registered Nurse* with a **bachelor’s degree** (BSN) must graduate from an accredited nursing four-year program of clinical training and education to be qualified to practice in the acute care setting as part of a healthcare team, *or* independently in the community, school, or public healthcare setting. Prior to becoming a Licensed School Nurse this nurse needs an additional 6,000s of work as a licensed RN and the required orientation.
- A *Registered Nurse* with an **associate degree** (ADN) must graduate from an accredited nursing two-year program of clinical training and education to be qualified to practice as a member of the healthcare team and within the healthcare setting. Prior to becoming an Associate School Nurse this nurse needs an additional 6,000 hours of work as a licensed RN and the required orientation.
- A *Licensed Practical Nurse ( LPN)* has one academic year of nursing education and may only practice at the direction of a healthcare professional who has an active RN license (or higher) regardless of the setting. LPNs may work in schools under the supervision of a school nurse; they may not practice as a school nurse nor use the title school nurse.
- A *Nursing Assistant*<sup>1</sup> must have a minimum of 80 hours of education to be licensed and may only practice under the supervision of a licensed nurse. VT schools rarely hire Nursing Assistants who are licensed by the Board of Nursing.
- To be licensed all must pass their particular NCLEX licensing exam (NCSBN, 2018).

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<sup>1</sup> 26 V.S.A. § 1641 (2)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What does “supervision” mean?

Supervision in nursing means clinical supervision of any delegated healthcare responsibilities, duties, tasks, management of, and direct or clinical care provided in any setting and in school sponsored settings, per written protocols and procedures. For example; when a SN delegates to a school secretary the administration of medication to specific students, the nurse is responsible for supervising the task and for monitoring the result. If an LPN delegates personal care to a school employed paraprofessional, the LPN is responsible for the supervision of those tasks.

The role of the SN in supervision includes training other school employees to perform health-related tasks safely, reviewing the task for appropriate delegation to someone who is adequately trained and able and willing to carry out the task, the documentation of the task, actual delegation, and resulting outcomes, and general assessment of the competency and safety of the individual doing the task. The nurse must document and verify that the task is being carried out as delegated. The nurse is responsible for the health outcome of the delegated care or tasks.

School administrators typically refer to supervision as the power to hire, impose work plans, and to dismiss an employee.<sup>2</sup> It also means monitoring the learning environment implemented for students by the supervised educator. Educators must follow laws, rules, policies, and protocols established by governing agencies and the governing school board.

In contrast, to SNs and licensed healthcare professionals, supervision means holding the legal responsibility for the health outcomes of specific *healthcare tasks* delegated to others<sup>3</sup>. The Vermont RN licensee must ensure that individuals carry out delegated tasks within the scope of practice as defined in statute (26 V.S.A. § 1572).

### What is the definition of “evaluation” in nursing practice?

Nurses evaluate the competencies and clinical practices of the persons carrying out any delegated tasks. SNs are responsible for evaluating and assessing the competencies of their own clinical practice, clinical assessment and skills, healthcare duties according to evidence-based standards of care and within their scope of practice. SNs must comply with requirements of governing agencies including Office of Professional Regulation and Agency of Education, school boards, Vermont’s Nurse Practice Act, and Education Quality Standards.

### What does “evaluation” look like for school administrators?

School administrators are responsible for the functioning of SNs as employees. The administrator monitors the effect of the nurse on the learning environment, including communication skills, collaboration, team work, and contributions to the school community. School administrators ensure that the nurse follows laws, rules, policies, and protocols established by agencies that regulate Vermont’s schools and school boards. These protocols include the completion of required reports to the Vermont Department of Health and of recommended monthly reports to the administrator and or school board. SNs and administrators can use a variety of available tools to evaluate the nurse as an employee, e.g.

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<sup>2</sup> See 16 V.S.A §§ 242 and 244 generally.

<sup>3</sup> National Council of State Boards of Nursing (2016). National Guidelines for Nursing Delegation

Rubric for Evaluating Colorado's Specialized Service Professionals (CO, 2017) and the VT SN Evaluation Tool. School nurses and school administrators should collaborate in advance to identify items for regular evaluation that are school-based for the administrator and separate from those that are clinically-based (which need evaluation or peer-assessment by licensed healthcare clinicians).

#### How are School Nurse clinical practice competencies evaluated?

School nursing competency can only be evaluated by another experienced SN. General nursing tasks and duties can be evaluated by another experienced nurse. Self-evaluation and a system of continuous quality improvement are key components of safe and ethical care, and are nursing responsibilities<sup>4</sup>.

#### How should an evaluation of clinical nursing competencies be carried out?

Short of hiring an outside consultant for this work, SNs should be following best practice established by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing and by their professional organizations (NCSBN, 2018) and at the Vermont Board of Nursing (VT BON, 2014).

National standards require SN to maintain current evidence based practices and to engage with their peers in relevant professional development including self and peer evaluation. Recommended tools are found in Vermont's Standards of Practice: School Health Services Manual (VDH-SOP:SHS) Evaluation Section # 14 for additional resources.

#### What does it mean to practice nursing without a license?

Delegation of nursing tasks by someone other than a licensed healthcare clinician may put both students and the persons carrying out the tasks at risk of injury, illness, serious, or possibly life-threatening complications. Unlicensed individuals practicing outside their assigned tasks and scope of practice can be liable for practicing nursing without a license.

For example, a SN who delegates to a paraprofessional, [ unlicensed assistive person (UAP)], the administration of insulin to a student, requires that the UAP document the activity. The SN may request that the UAP verbally report back to the SN, the carbohydrate count and the insulin dose administered by that UAP, before the student leaves on the school bus. That UAP *must* follow the protocol established by the SN, and must report to the nurse. This requires that the UAP maintain regular and specific communications with the licensed nurse in charge of the patient [student]<sup>5</sup>. The SN's assessment may include knowledge of other health factors, such as the student's activity level and recent illness or medication interactions indicating the need for further intervention by the nurse, emergency department, or the family. Failure of the UAP to report directly to the SN misses the opportunity for the correction of an error by the UAP or, using nursing judgement, to recognize the need for further life-saving actions.

The nurse is the only person qualified to delegate a nursing task. No unlicensed person may delegate a health or nursing tasks to be carried out by another person on behalf of that student (patient). Neither can a UAP who agrees to perform a delegated task, delegate that task to anyone else.

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<sup>4</sup> ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses (2015)

<sup>5</sup> National Council of State Boards of Nursing (2016). National Guidelines for Nursing Delegation

Is a health assistant required to be licensed?

The term health assistant may describe unlicensed assistive personnel (UAP) to whom a SN delegates specific nursing tasks. A UAP is responsible for carrying out tasks as delegated by the SN per written protocols. The UAP is responsible to the SN for the work related to those tasks. A SN, using nursing judgement, may determine with the medical, family team that the needs of a group or of individual students warrants the extra training required by a licensed healthcare clinician to safely access a Free and Appropriate Public Education.

Who may use the title of School Nurse?

- An RN licensed as a Licensed School Nurse (AOE, Licensing Rules, pg. 130) is called a *Licensed School Nurse*.
- An RN licensed as an Associate School Nurse (AOE, Licensing Rules pg. 135) is called an *Associate School Nurse*.
- Healthcare clinicians not licensed by the AOE cannot use either protected title of School Nurse or Associate School Nurse.

## Recommended Tools

**Vermont Agency of Education and Department of Health - Standards of Practice: School Health Services Manual:** [http://healthvermont.gov/local/school/SchoolHealth-Standards\\_of\\_Practice.aspx#manual](http://healthvermont.gov/local/school/SchoolHealth-Standards_of_Practice.aspx#manual)

School Nurse/Associate SN Evaluation Tool (2018/19 pilot project) available by contacting the Vermont Department of Health [State School Nurse Consultant](#)

## Resources

**ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses (2015)** <http://nursingworld.org/DocumentVault/Ethics-1/Code-of-Ethics-for-Nurses.html>

**Colorado Department of Education:** Rubric for Evaluating Colorado's Specialized Service Professionals (2018): <https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatoreffectiveness/specialservicesproviders>

**National Association of School Nurses:** <http://www.nasn.org/>

[National Association of State School Nurse Consultants](#)

**National Council of State Boards of Nursing (2016).**

National Guidelines for Nursing Delegation:  
[https://www.ncsbn.org/NCsBN\\_Delegation\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://www.ncsbn.org/NCsBN_Delegation_Guidelines.pdf)

NCLEX licensing exam: <https://www.ncsbn.org/nclex.htm>

**Vermont Board of Nursing:** <https://www.sec.state.vt.us/professional-regulation/list-of-professions/nursing.aspx>

**Vermont Agency of Education:** Educator Licensing Rules:  
<http://education.vermont.gov/documents/educator-quality-licensing-rules#page34>

**Vermont Statutes Online:**

26 V.S.A. § 1572 Definitions: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/26/028/01572>