

HB19-1203: SCHOOL NURSE GRANT PROGRAM

Concerning the creation of a grant program to increase the number of school nurses.

Details

Bill Sponsors:	House – <i>Mullica (D)</i> Senate – <i>Todd (D)</i>
Committee:	House Education House Appropriations
Bill History:	2/20/2019 – Introduced 3/5/2019 – House Education Refer Amended to House Appropriations
Next Action:	Hearing in House Appropriations
Fiscal Note:	<u>2/28/2019 Version</u>

Bill Summary

The school nurse grant program is created within the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). The program is to award grants on a 5-year cycle to local education providers in order to increase the number of school nurses in the state. A local education provider that is awarded a grant is to use the funds to hire school nurses in the selected school(s). The grant is intended to supplement and not replace the existing local funding for the positions and school health services. A small rural district or rural district that is awarded the grant is to make reasonable efforts to use the funding to hire a school nurses for the selected school(s). If the district demonstrates to CDE that they cannot find an individual to fill the position, the district can use the funds to contract with a local public health agency, federally qualified health center, or community health provider to provide services in the school(s). The person contracted must meet/exceed the academic and professional qualifications of a school nurse. In the grant application the local education provider must comply with the process and requires set by the CDE or State Board of Education and include specific information outlined within the bill.

Subject to available appropriations, the State Board is to award up to \$3 million annually. Each grant has an initial term of one year and renewed annually for an additional four years if the school nurse is retained in the position and the local education provider continues to use the funds for authorized purposes. The Board can fund more than one position per grant recipient. The grant amount must cover the cost of hiring school nurse position(s) in the selected school(s). At the end of the initial five-year grant cycle, and each subsequent cycle, CDE is to solicit and review applications as well as award new grants. CDE is to review applications and make recommendations to the Board about the awarding of grants. In awarding grants, the Board can establish through rulemaking additional selection criteria, but is to give preference to a small rural district or rural district or is eligible to receive funds through Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act¹.

In any fiscal year there is an appropriation to the CDE for the grant program, each grant recipient is to provide information to the CDE by June 30 about the number of positions hired, number of students served, an explanation of services provided, and the impact of the position on the local education provider and the students it serves. By September 1, 2020 and every September 1 in each fiscal year in which the Board has awarded grants the prior fiscal year, CDE is to submit a report to the House Education, House Health and

¹ 20 U.S.C. SEC. 6301 Et Seq. This program provides financial assistance to local educational agencies and schools with high numbers/percentages of children from low-income families. More information at: <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html>

Insurance, Senate Education, and Senate Health and Human Services Committees including (at a minimum) the information reported by the grant recipients in June.

The bill is effective upon the Governor's signature or if the Governor allows it to become law without their signature.

Issue Summary

School Nurses

School nurses have served a number of roles in student health: (1) direct health care for students with acute injuries, illnesses, or long-term health management needs; (2) health expert for the school; (3) screening and referral for health conditions; (4) promotes healthy behaviors for the school environment on the whole; (5) promotes individual health and self-care for students, faculty, and employees; (6) leader for school health program development; and, (7) liaison between school personnel, family, health care professionals, and the community. School nurses frequently serve as the link between students and their other health care points of contact including teachers, parents, health providers, and community resources. School nurses can also serve as the first point of referral for students experiencing mental and behavioral health crises.²

The American Association of Pediatrics once recommended a ratio of 750 students for every one school nurse; however, it has since revised that recommendation to instead advocate for a full-time nurse in every school.³ A lower school nurse to student ratio has shown numerous benefits, including better care for students with chronic conditions and more counseling services for students experiencing social problems. Further, schools with lower nurse-to-student ratios had more follow-ups for student health issues, including corrective lenses for students with vision problems, care for school-related injuries, and for the counseling services mentioned before.⁴ Researchers have found that a full-time school nurses reduced absenteeism and the number of visits to emergency rooms.⁵ Reducing absenteeism and ER visits is better for school, family, and community economic and social costs.

School Nurses in Colorado

Colorado's estimated nurse-to-student ratio is 1428:1.⁶ The state has frequently been at the bottom of national rankings due to this high ratio.⁷ Few school districts in Colorado can gather the funds to put a nurse in every school, or even have a nurse on the school campus for just part of a single day during the week. The funding for school nurses comes from a variety of sources including the general fund of school districts, Medicaid reimbursement for schools⁸, and the state's School Health Professional Grant Program. The School Health Professional Grant Program not only provides funding for school nurses but also school psychologists,

² Council on School Health. (2008). "Role of the School Nurse in Providing School Health Services." *American Academy of Pediatrics*. Retrieved from <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/121/5/1052>.

³ American Academy of Pediatrics (May 23, 2016). *AAP Policy Statement Recommends Full Time Nurse in Every School*. Retrieved from <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/AAP-Policy-Statement-Recommends-Full-Time-Nurse-in-Every-School.aspx>

⁴ Guttu, M, Engelke, M.K., and Swanson, M. (2009). "Does the School Nurse-to-Student Ratio Make a Difference?" *Journal for School Health for the American School Health Association*. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy2.library.colostate.edu/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2004.tb06593.x>.

⁵ Rodriguez, E, Rivera, D.A., Perlroth, D., Becker, E., Wang, N.E., and Landau, M. (2013). "School Nurses' Role in Asthma Management, School Absenteeism, and Cost Savings: A Demonstration Project." *Journal of School Health for the American School Health Association*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24261518>.

⁶ Colorado Children's Campaign. (2019). *HB19-1203 (Mullica/Todd) School Nurse Grant Program*. Retrieved from <https://www.coloradokids.org/advocacy/at-the-capitol/capitol-updates/hb19-1203-mullica-todd-school-nurse-grant-program/>

⁷ National Education Association (n.d.) *A National Look at the School Nurse Shortage*. Retrieved from <http://www.nea.org/home/35691.htm>; Jones, R. (Jan. 24, 2011). A dose of reality: more sick kids, fewer school nurses. *Chalkbeat*. Retrieved from <https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/co/2011/01/24/a-dose-of-reality-more-sick-kids-fewer-school-nurses/>

⁸ Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (Nov. 1, 2016). *Letter to Joint Budget Committee*. Retrieved from <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/Health%20Care%20Policy%20and%20Financing%20FY%202016-17%20RFI%205.pdf>

school social workers, and school counselors.⁹ This program provides funding for a variety of school health positions, not just school nurses, and tends to focus on the impact that the funded positions would have on student behavioral health and substance use.

School Nurses in Poudre School District

Poudre School District (PSD) currently has a team of 14 school nurses that cover all of the 50 schools in the district as well as 1 nurse that exclusively serves the Early Head Start program. This means that besides the nurse that serves the Early Head Start Program, each of the nurses must cover multiple schools throughout the week. The total count in PSD was reported to be 30,463 students in the 2018-2019 school year.¹⁰ Therefore, a nurse-to-student ratio is estimated at one nurse for every 2,030 students.

Supporters

- American Academy of Pediatrics
- American Federation of Teachers Colorado
- Children's Hospital Colorado
- Colorado Association of Nurse Anesthetists
- Colorado Association of School Nurses
- Colorado Children's Immunization Coalition
- Colorado Education Association
- Colorado Nurses Association
- Poudre School District

Opponents

- Any opposition has not been made public at this time.

About this Brief

This brief was prepared by Health District of Northern Larimer County staff to assist the Health District Board of Directors in determining whether to take an official stand on various health-related issues. The Health District is a special district of the northern two-thirds of Larimer County, Colorado, supported by local property tax dollars and governed by a publicly elected five-member board. The Health District provides medical, mental health, dental, preventive and health planning services to the communities it serves. This brief is accurate to staff knowledge as of date printed. For more information about this summary or the Health District, please contact Alyson Williams, Policy Coordinator, at (970) 224-5209, or e-mail at awilliams@healthdistrict.org.

⁹ Department of Education (n.d.). *School Professional Grant Program*. Retrieved from <https://www.cde.state.co.us/healthandwellness/spgp>

¹⁰ Poudre School District (2018). *2018-19 Enrollment*. Retrieved from <https://www.psdschools.org/your-district/about-psd/enrollment-demographics>