



Guidelines for Student Health Plan Development

2026

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Considerations and Disclaimers

- **Cultural Considerations:** To meet the healthcare needs of students from diverse communities, it is important that school staff respond with respect toward the needs of all students' identities and their concepts of wellness, illness, and healthcare. The Washington State Professional Educator Standards Board identifies principles for educators to promote equity with cultural competency that address "...students' experiences and individual cultural contexts" (Washington Professional Educator Standards Board, 2025).
- **Disclaimers:** Recommendations made in these guidelines should never be substituted for legal counsel in any individual situation. The law may be silent, unclear, or superseded by new legislation on specific aspects of care. In these instances, it is recommended that district administrators consult with district legal counsel and a risk management consultant. When addressing situations or questions, consider district policies and procedures that should reflect current state and federal statutes and district practice. New developments in treatment may emerge or new laws may be created between updates of these guidelines. Refer to pertinent regulations, policies, and standards of care to guide care planning decisions. Any forms and documents referenced in this document are not endorsed or mandated by the School Nurse Corps (SNC) and should be approved by each individual school district's administration and/or board of directors as applicable.

1. Introduction

Care planning and coordination are central to school nursing practice. Nurses collaborate with students, families, healthcare providers, and school staff to develop individualized plans that address health and learning needs. School nurses lead the creation of Individualized Health Plans (IHPs) and Emergency Care Plans (ECPs), and provide clinical guidance to teams such as 504, Individual Education Plan (IEP), and Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) teams (National Association of School Nurses, 2023).

IHPs, ECPs, 504 plans, and IEPs ensure that students with disabilities have the planning, services, and accommodation necessary to facilitate attendance and success in the school setting. Federal and state laws, as well as state nurse practice acts, govern the process and eligibility of students for these services. School nurses play a vital role in each of these processes.

2. Individualized Health Plan (IHP)

- **Purpose:** Students with complex healthcare needs requiring specialized care in school should have **Individual Health Plans** (IHPs) that are developed by the school nurse in collaboration with the student (as appropriate), family, education staff and healthcare providers. IHPs delineate school nurse interventions and care coordination that promote optimal student health, safety, attendance, and academic achievement in a supportive and inclusive school setting, so that students may thrive and reach their full potential. Nurse-led care coordination facilitates continuity of care in managing a student's health needs in school which may occur, for example, when substitute nursing coverage is required, during a medical emergency, or as the student progresses through the school system (National Association of School Nurses, 2025).
 - IHPs outline nursing care for students with complex health needs. Only registered professional nurses are qualified to develop, implement, and update IHPs, which are reviewed annually or as needed. Each IHP is a unique, student-centered, stand-alone nursing document that contains protected student health information. Some information from IHPs may be shared by the school nurse with school personnel, as needed, and may be used to inform the development of emergency care plans, 504s, or special education IEPs for curricular modifications and related services delivery.
- **Components:** IHPs include student demographics, health history, medications, treatments, allergies, diagnoses, educational implications, accommodations, transportation, extracurricular activities, disaster planning, staff training, objectives, and outcomes.
- **Audience:** Licensed nurses (RNs and LPNs); school staff with a “need to know.” ([34 CFR 99.31 FERPA](#))
- **School Nurse Responsibility:** Identify students whose health needs require a *nursing* care plan and create plans where appropriate. IHPs are necessary to document the nursing process and considerations not related to emergency interventions.
- **Signature Requirements:** School nurse. Parent or guardian signatures and students (if appropriate) are optimal but not required.
- **Emergency Planning:**

- **ECPs:** Students with IHPs may also need an ECP if their health conditions put them at risk of a health emergency at school. The ECP should explain, in plain language, the signs of an impending health emergency and appropriate action steps.
- **District Emergency Operations Plan (EOP):** Care needs for students requiring an IHP and/or ECP should also be reflected in district EOPs to ensure safety during emergencies. Plans must address mobility, sensory needs, medication, treatments, and oxygen needs, and be standardized across the district. Ensure that district EOP incorporates essential student health information, with access coordinated through the school nurse.
- **Sample Individualized Health Plan (IHP):**
 - [Allergy and anaphylaxis detailed IHP \(Utah DOH\)](#)
 - [IHP Seizures \(Utah DOH\)](#)
 - [IHP Generic \(Utah DOH\)](#)
 - [Diabetes detailed IHP \(Utah DOH\)](#)

3. Emergency Care Plan (ECP)

- **Purpose:** Emergency Care Plans (ECP) provide clear, individualized instructions for responding to student health emergencies. They are written to provide guidance to unlicensed assistive personnel (UAP) and must use lay language. ECPs must be individualized for each student. Nursing assessment of each student's response and adaptation to their health condition and medication/treatment guide the individualization of each ECP. Washington State law requires that students with life-threatening health conditions have medication or treatment orders in place before attending school ([RCW 28A.210.320](#)). Students identified as having a life-threatening health condition must be prioritized to support school attendance. Students experiencing homelessness or in foster care have enrollment protections and may attend while required orders and medications are being obtained. The goal is to balance student safety with the student's right to uninterrupted access to education.
- **Components:** Emergency Care Plans (ECP) include student and emergency contact information, current photo, signs and symptoms to look for, emergency medication orders, treatments, allergies, diagnoses, special considerations, and delegation of care.

- **Audience:** Non-licensed school staff members.
- **School Nurse Responsibility:** Identify students who are at risk of experiencing a health-condition-related-emergency at school and at school-sponsored activities and create and disseminate ECPs to direct actions to be taken in an emergency by school staff.
- **Signature Requirements:** School nurse. Parent or guardian signatures are best practice but not required.
- **Sample Emergency Care Plan (ECP)**
 - [Generic ECP \(Utah DOH\)](#)
 - [Diabetes ECP \(Utah DOH\)](#)
 - [Sample Asthma ECP \(ESD 113\)](#)
 - [Sample Allergy ECP \(ESD 113\)](#)

4. Section 504

- **Overview:** Section 504 prohibits disability discrimination and requires schools receiving federal funding to provide students with disabilities with a free appropriate public education (FAPE) ([Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#)). Schools must provide necessary accommodations, aids, and services. A Section 504 plan is a written plan that describes the educational and related aids and services that a student identified as having a disability requires to receive a free and appropriate education. The content of a Section 504 Plan is fluid and may change within a school year or between school years as a student's needs and services change. A district must provide the services identified in a student's Section 504 plan.

An Individualized Health Plan (IHP) may serve as all or part of a student's Section 504 plan; however, if it is used for this purpose, it must be explicitly identified as the Section 504 plan. In all cases, the district must follow the full Section 504 process, including required legal components such as parent/guardian notification of rights, a properly convened 504 team, evaluation and documentation procedures, and all other mandated steps.

- **Eligibility:** Students with physical or mental impairments that limit one or more major life activities qualify. IHPs and ECPs may serve as part of a 504 plan, but districts must follow evaluation and due process procedures.

Federal and state guidance require 504 evaluations for students with:

- Anxiety
- Asthma
- ADHD
- Bipolar disorder
- Cancer
- COVID/Long COVID
- Depression
- Diabetes
- Eating disorders
- Ebola
- Epilepsy
- Food allergies
- Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)
- Hepatitis
- Hidden disabilities (e.g. low vision, poor hearing)
- Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)
- Measles (especially students who are medically unable to receive vaccinations due to a disability)
- Migraine
- Narcolepsy
- Stuttering
- Sickle cell disease

[Disability Discrimination: Specific Illnesses and Medical Conditions](#)

In addition, Washington state guidance requires 504 evaluations and due process procedures for all students with life-threatening health conditions ([OSPI FAQ: How do Section 504 apply to health conditions?](#)).

- **Audience:** School staff with “need to know.” ([34 CFR 99.31 FERPA](#))
- **School Nurse Responsibility:** The School Nurse should refer students who may be eligible for Section 504 to the 504 Coordinator for evaluation and should serve on the 504 team.
- **Signature Requirements:** Parent or guardian, student (as appropriate), entire 504 team.
- **Sample Health-Related Section 504 Plan**
 - [Sample 504 Diabetes \(American Diabetes Association\)](#)

- [Sample 504 Seizures \(Epilepsy Foundation\)](#)
-

5. Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

- **Overview:** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law guaranteeing eligible children with disabilities a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) ([Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#)). An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is a written plan outlining the specific educational goals, services, and support needed for a student with a disability to thrive in a school setting. This plan is created by the Special Education Team after a student has been evaluated and found eligible to qualify for these services.
 - **Audience:** Entire education team.
 - **School Nurse Responsibility:** A School Nurse plays a crucial role in IEPs by assessing health needs, developing individual health plans, and collaborating with the IEP team to ensure students with disabilities receive appropriate health services and accommodations to support their education. The School Nurse should work with the IEP coordinator to provide input into IEPs for students with health conditions. This may include incorporating the IHP into the IEP.
 - **Signature Requirements:** Parent or guardian, student (as appropriate), IEP team.
 - [SNC's Special Healthcare Needs Assessment Form](#)
-

6. Health Plan Template Integration Workflow

This section outlines the step-by-step process for integrating IHP, ECP, EOP, IEP, and 504 templates into your school health services workflow.

Workflow Steps

1. Identify Student Need

New diagnosis, acuity level, health history/annual review, staff observation, or parent request.

2. Gather Information

Collect medical documentation, parent/guardian input, provider orders, health history and other school records to guide nursing assessment.

3. Determine Type(s) of Plan Needed and Complete Forms

Choose and fill out the appropriate form(s) and/or refer to the appropriate team.

4. Review and Approve

Review, collaborate and obtain necessary signatures.

5. Store and Share

Upload completed plan to secure student records system and share with authorized staff with a need to know (consider bus drivers, teachers, substitute teacher or nurse, administrators, specialists such as art, PE, music teachers, coaches, nutrition staff, playground paras, etc.) ([34 CFR 99.31 FERPA](#))

6. Train Staff

Provide training for staff responsible for implementing the plan.

7. Implement and Monitor

Put the plan into action and monitor student health and accommodations.

8. Evaluate and Update

Periodically evaluate documentation and gather feedback for improvement.

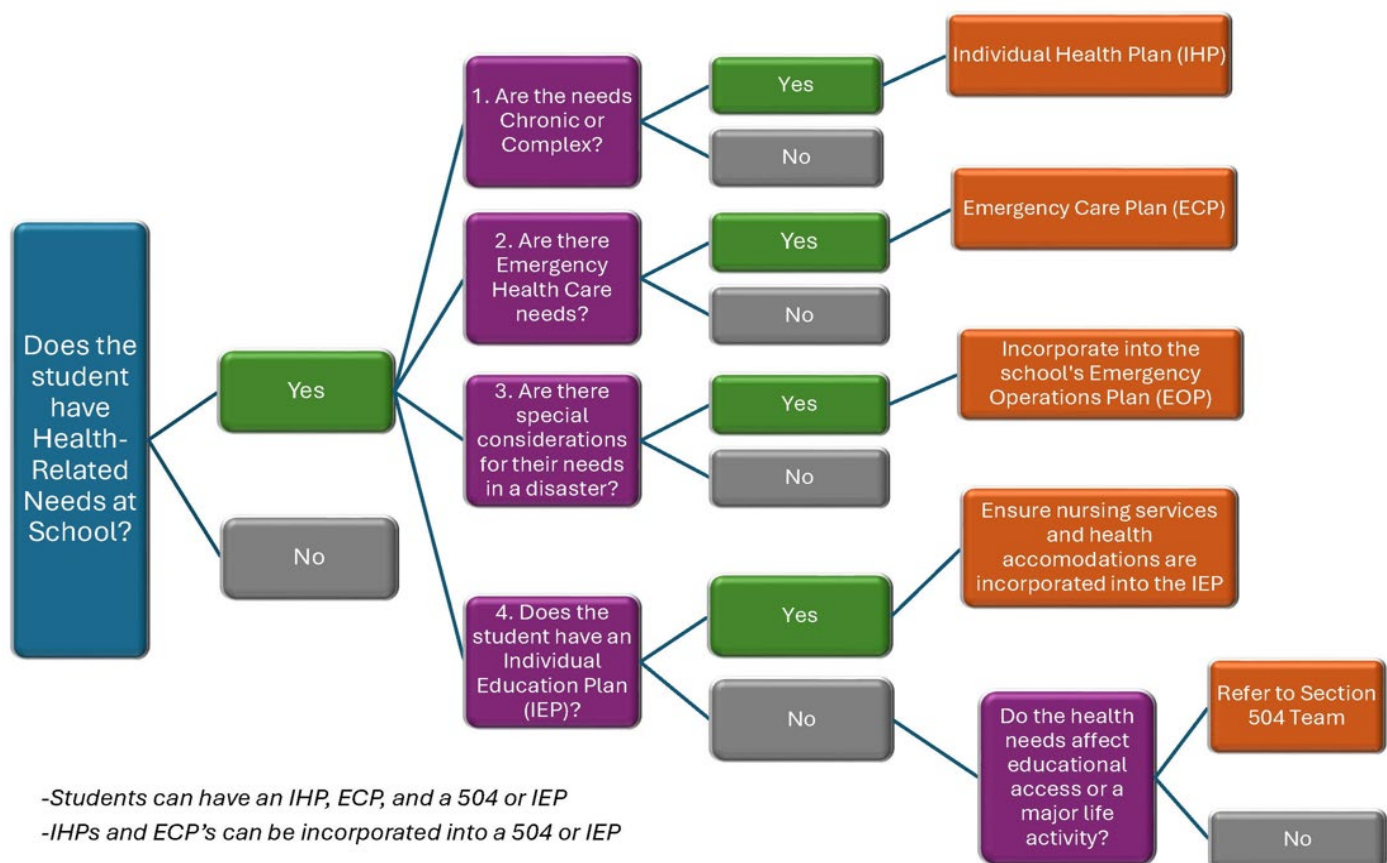
Adjust plan as needed depending on student condition and change acuity code if appropriate.

7. Care Plan Process Flowchart: Determining Need for Health Plans

This section provides a visual decision-making flow chart to help staff determine which health plan template is appropriate for a student based on their needs (See Figure 1. on next page)

Figure 1. Care Plan Process Flowchart: Determining the Appropriate Health Plan

Should the Student have an IHP, ECP, 504, and/or IEP?



8. Staff Training Requirements

General and Specific Training Requirements:

Emergency Care Plan (ECP) Training: Staff designated to implement ECPs must be trained annually by the school nurse or licensed provider. Training covers emergency recognition, avoidance strategies for known triggers, medication administration, notification procedures, documentation, confidentiality and bullying prevention, and includes delegation as appropriate. To ensure coverage, multiple staff members must be trained.

Emergency Management: Staff members directly responsible for students with special healthcare needs should receive specialized training on how to manage their needs during a medical emergency. Examples may include:

- A student with a life-threatening health condition experiences a health emergency and requires medical care and medication administration during an evacuation.
 - A student who relies on a regular power source for a portable ventilator is at school during a power outage.
 - A student with chronic asthma requires administration of a metered dose inhaler during a prolonged shelter-in-place event when movement in the building is prohibited.
 - A student with limited mobility who uses an electric wheelchair must be evacuated from an upper floor classroom during a power outage.
- Please refer to: [WA State School Staff Health Training Guide](#)

9. Student Health Information Access and Confidentiality

Access to student information must always align with FERPA, the Washington State Medical Records law ([RCW 70.02.050](#)), state privacy laws, district policies, and professional ethical standards. Schools are not HIPAA covered entities with few exceptions (school-based health centers and Medicaid billing). A clear understanding of what information may be accessed, how it may be shared, and how it must be protected is essential to supporting student health while maintaining confidentiality and trust.

Who may access a student's health plan (IHP, ECP, nursing care plan)?

- Parent/guardian or eligible student

- District and building nurses
- Health room staff
- Staff with “need to know”
- School officials with legitimate educational interest
- Access should not be provided to staff without responsibility for the student.
- Other entities may access without a release including federal, state or local public health, legal or other district consultants, and/or law enforcement.

10. Resources

Laws And Regulations

Federal and state laws provide protection for students with health conditions. School districts are legally obligated by these laws to ensure students with health conditions have equal access to their free appropriate public education (FAPE). School districts must also have and follow their own policies and procedures for the health and well-being of such students.

Federal Laws and Regulations

- *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504)*
 - The duty of public-school districts to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities; protects disabled public-school students from discrimination.
 - <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/civil-rights-center/statutes/section-504-rehabilitation-act-of-1973>
- *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1976 (IDEA)*
 - The duty of states and public agencies to provide early intervention, special education, and related services for students whose disability impacts their ability to learn.
 - [*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1976*](#)
- Also see:
 - *OSPI Special Education WAC and Federal IDEA*
 - A list of state and federal laws and regulations that provide the regulatory and statutory basis for special education services in Washington
 - [*Special Education WAC and Federal IDEA*](#)
 - *OSPI Individualized Education Program*

- Individualized Education Program (IEP) documentation, FAQs, and requirements
- [Individualized Education Program \(IEP\)](#)
- *OSPI Section 504 & Students with Disabilities – Resources for School Districts*
 - Section 504 resources, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) policies and guidance, staff training, sample form
 - [Section 504 for School Districts](#)
- *OSPI Section 504 & Students with Disabilities – Information for Families*
 - Section 504 resources, parent notifications, coordinator contact information
 - [Section 504 for Families](#)

Washington State Laws and Regulations

Revised Codes of Washington (RCW)

Health Care Delivery:

- RCW 18.79.260 *Registered nurse—Activities allowed—Delegation of tasks.* <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=18.79.260>
- RCW 28A.210.260 *Public and private schools—Administration of medication—Conditions.*
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.210.260>
- RCW 28A.210.320 *Children with life-threatening health conditions- Medication or treatment orders-Rules.*
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.210.320>
- RCW 28A.210.330 *Students with diabetes – Individual health plans – Designation of professional consult and coordinate with parents and health care provider – Training and supervision of school personnel.*
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.210.330>
- RCW 28A.210.350 *Students with diabetes, epilepsy or other seizure disorders, or adrenal insufficiency—Compliance with individual health plan—Immunity.*
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.210.350>
- RCW 28A.210.355 *Students with epilepsy or other seizure disorders— Individual health plans—Designation of professional to consult and coordinate with parents and health care provider—Training and supervision of school district personnel—Parent-designated adults.*
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.210.355>

- *RCW 28A.210.358 Addressing the care of students with adrenal insufficiency by parent-designated adults.*
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.210.358>
- *RCW 4.24.300(4) Good Samaritan Law–Immunity from Liability in Medical Care*
<https://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=4.24.300>
- *RCW 7.70.065(2bi) Informed consent - Persons authorized to provide for patients who do not have capacity—Priority—Unaccompanied homeless minors.*
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=7.70.065>

Special Education:

- Chapter 28A.155 RCW Special Education
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.155>
- Chapter 392-172A WAC:

Washington Administrative Code (WAC)

- WAC 246.760.010(13) - *Definitions, abbreviations, and acronyms*
<https://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=246-760-010> Includes legal definition of school nurse.
- WAC 246-840-700 *Standards of nursing conduct or practice.*
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=246-840-700>
Identifies responsibilities of the professional registered nurse and the licensed practical nurse.
- WAC 392-172A-01035 - *Child with a disability or student eligible for special education services*
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx/default.aspx?cite=392-172A-01035>
- WAC 392-172A-01155: *Related services*
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=392-172A-01155>
- WAC 392-172A-02000: *Students' rights to a free appropriate public education (FAPE).* <https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=392-172a-02000>
- WAC 392-172A-03020: *Evaluation procedures*
<https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=392-172A-03020>

Guidance Manuals, Advisory Opinions, Position Statements, Policies and Procedures

Guidelines

- **Guidelines for Care of Students with Anaphylaxis (OSPI, 2021)**
<https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2023-08/2021-guidelines-care-students-anaphylaxis-ud.pdf>
- **Guidelines for Care of Students with Diabetes (OSPI, 2024)**
<https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2024-04/guidance-schoolnurse-guidelinesforstudentswithdiabete.pdf>
- **Guidelines for Medication Administration in Schools (OSPI, 2022)**
<https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2023-08/guidelines-medication-administration-schools2022.pdf>
- **School Nursing Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Guideline: Students with Allergies and Risk for Anaphylaxis (NASN, 2023)**
<https://learn.nasn.org/courses/58496>
- **School Nursing Clinical Practice Guideline Implementation Toolkit: Students with Asthma (NASN, 2024)** <https://learn.nasn.org/courses/89761>
- **School Nursing Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Guideline: Students with Seizures and Epilepsy CPG Implementation Toolkit (NASN, 2024)**
<https://learn.nasn.org/courses/63450>
- **School Nursing Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Guideline: Students with Type 1 Diabetes (NASN, 2021)** <https://learn.nasn.org/courses/37660>
- **Student Health Services Guidebook (School Nurse Corps – ESD 105)** Guidance on development of IHPs, ECPs, 504s.
<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1737996159/esd105org/uizidsdp4yqvuybok e9b/STUDENT-HEALTHSERVICES-GUIDEBOOK2024.pdf>
- **Washington State School Staff Health Training Guide (School Nurse Corps)** School staff training related to IHPs, ECPs, 504s. [Washington-State-School-Health-Training-Manual-2022.pdf \(nwesd.org\)](https://www.nwesd.org/Portals/0/Training-Manual-2022.pdf)

Washington Board of Nursing Advisory Opinions

- **Registered Nurse Delegation in School Settings:** Kindergarten-Twelve (K-12) Grades, Public and Private Schools. Number: NCAO 15.01. (WABON, January 14, 2022). RN delegation practices in the school setting, including in relationship to IHPs and ECPs.
<https://nursing.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-06/NCAO15.pdf>

- **Seizure Disorder Management:** Nursing Care Coordination. Number: NCAO 30.00 (WABON, January 14, 2022) provides guidance about the roles, responsibilities, and scope of practice for the RN and LPN in nursing care coordination, including IHP and ECPs in seizure disorder management.
<https://nursing.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-02/NCAO30.pdf>

National Association of School Nurses (NASN) Position Statements

- **Individualized Healthcare Plans (IHPs): Promoting Health and Learning for Students with Complex Needs**
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10598405251332784>
- **IDEA and Section 504 Teams – The School Nurse as an Essential Team Member** <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1942602X231177119>

WA State School Directors Association (WSSDA) Model Policies & Procedures

- 2161/2161P Special Education and Related Services for Eligible Students
- 2162/2162P Education of Students with Disabilities Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- 3411 Accommodating Students with Seizure Disorders or Epilepsy
- 3413/3413P Student Immunization and Life-Threatening Health Conditions
- 3415 Accommodating Students with Diabetes
- 3419/3419P Self-Administration of Asthma and Anaphylaxis Medications
- 3420/3420P Anaphylaxis Prevention and Response
- 3432/3432P Emergencies

In-Text References

- National Association of School Nurses. (2025). *Individualized healthcare plans (IHPs)—Promoting health and learning for students with complex needs*. Journal of School Nursing. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10598405251332784>
- National Association of School Nurses. (2023). *Position Statement: IDEA and Section 504 Teams—The School Nurse as an Essential Team Member*. NASN School Nurse. doi:[10.1177/1942602X231177119](https://doi.org/10.1177/1942602X231177119)
- U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. (2025). *Disability discrimination: Specific illnesses and medical conditions*. <https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/civil-rights-laws/disability-discrimination/disability-discrimination-key-issues/disability-discrimination-specific-illnesses-and-medical-conditions>
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Communications and Outreach. (2025). *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*. <https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/individuals-disabilities/idea>

- U.S. Department of Labor, Civil Rights Center. (n.d.). *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973*. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/civil-rights-center/statutes/section-504-rehabilitation-act-of-1973>
- Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (n.d.). *504 plans and students with disabilities*. <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/policy-funding/equity-and-civil-rights/resources-school-districts-civil-rights-washington-schools/504-plans-and-students-disabilities>
- Washington State Legislature. (n.d.). *RCW 28A.210.320: Children with life-threatening health conditions—Medication or treatment orders—Rules*. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.210.320>
- Washington State Legislature. (n.d.). *RCW 70.02.050: Disclosure without patient's authorization – Need-to-know basis*. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=70.02.050>

11. Glossary of Terms

Accommodations: Individualized changes or supports in the school setting that ensure a student with a disability has equal access to, and can fully participate in, school programs and activities.

Delegation: Nursing delegation is defined as, “The transfer of the performance of selected nursing tasks to competent individuals in selected situations.” The registered nurse delegating the task is responsible and accountable for the nursing care of the patient. The registered nurse delegating the task supervises the performance of the unlicensed person. Nurses must follow the delegation process. [RCW 18.79.260](#), [RCW 28A.210.260](#), and [WAC 246-840-930](#).

Emergency Care Plan (ECP): A type of nursing care plan developed by the school nurse that specifies the actions needed to manage a student’s needs in the event of a medical emergency. Can be referred to as an Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Refer to examples: [CDC Asthma Action Plan](#), [National Epilepsy Foundation General Seizure Action Plan](#), [National Epilepsy Foundation Acute Seizure Action Plan](#).

Emergency Operations Plan (EOP): A comprehensive document that outlines how a school district will respond to emergencies and disasters to ensure the safety and well-being of students, staff, and the wider school community. An EOP addresses various potential threats and hazards, including natural disasters, human-caused incidents, health-related emergencies, and technological threats. The plan provides specific procedures for before, during, and after emergency events, including shelter-in-place and evacuation plans.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): A federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to schools receiving federal funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their student’s education records and these rights transfer to the student when the student reaches age 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. FERPA permits school officials to disclose, without consent, education records, or personally identifiable information from education records to appropriate parties

in connection with an emergency, if knowledge of that information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals (e.g., on a need-to-know basis).

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), Public Law 104-191 . A federal law that establishes national standards for protecting the privacy and security of individuals' medical information. In the school setting, HIPAA generally applies to healthcare providers—such as clinics, hospitals, and some school-based health centers—that electronically transmit health information. Most student health information maintained by a school or district nurse **is not covered by HIPAA**; instead, it is considered an **education record** protected under **FERPA**. HIPAA becomes relevant only when schools interact with outside healthcare providers or receive medical information from HIPAA-covered entities. In these cases, HIPAA allows providers to share needed health information with schools **when necessary to ensure the health or safety of a student or others**, consistent with FERPA's health and safety emergency exception.

Healthcare Provider: An authorized prescriber. A physician, nurse practitioner, certified midwife, podiatrist, physician's assistant, or dentist.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): A document required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) for students with disabilities that outlines their need for special education and related services.

Individualized Health Care Plan (IHP): A type of nursing care plan developed by the school nurse utilizing data from a nursing assessment. It outlines the specific healthcare needs of a student and how those needs will be addressed within the school environment. The IHP is a collaborative effort between the school nurse, parents, and other relevant individuals to ensure the student's health and safety while participating in school activities.

Medication Administration: The safe and accurate process of giving prescribed or authorized medication to a student during the school day or during school-sponsored activities. Medication administration in schools follows written authorization from a parent/guardian and a licensed healthcare provider and must be performed by trained and designated school personnel in accordance with state law and district policy.

The process includes secure storage, proper documentation, adherence to dosage and timing requirements, monitoring for side effects, and communicating any concerns to the appropriate healthcare provider and parent/guardian. The goal is to ensure student safety and support their ability to fully participate in school.

Guidelines for Medication Administration in Schools

Nursing Assessment: The act of gathering and identifying data that assists the nurse, the client (e.g., student in the school setting), and the client's parent/caregiver to identify the client's health concerns and needs. **NCAQC Advisory Opinion- Registered Nurse Delegation in School Settings: Kindergarten-Twelve (K-12) Grades, Public and Private Schools**

Nurse Practice Act: A state law that defines the scope of practice, responsibilities, and legal standards for licensed nurses. The Nurse Practice Act outlines what nurses are permitted to do, the level of supervision required, and the competencies needed to provide safe and effective care. It also establishes the authority of the State Board of Nursing to license nurses, set rules, and take disciplinary action when standards are not met.

In the school setting, the Nurse Practice Act guides the professional responsibilities of school nurses, including delegation, clinical judgment, medication administration oversight, and the protection of student health and safety. It ensures that nursing tasks performed in schools meet established professional and legal standards.

[RCW 18.79.040](#) , [WAC 246-840](#)

Nursing Process: A systematic, client-centered method that nurses use to deliver care. It involves five key steps: assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation. This process helps nurses provide holistic, patient-focused care by guiding them through critical thinking and decision-making.

School Nurse: A registered professional nurse currently licensed by the Washington State Board of Nursing who works in a school setting.

Section 504 Plan: An education plan developed by a school team for a student with a disability in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and 34 C.F.R. Part 104 that specifies services designed to meet the student's individual educational needs so the student can access a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). [OSPI Section 504 & Students with Disabilities](#)

School-Sponsored Activities: Academic and non-academic school programs and activities at schools that receive federal financial assistance and are therefore subject to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (see 34 C.F.R. Part 104). These activities are those the student attends as a participant and not those attended as an observer.

Special Education: Specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a student with a disability. It's a range of services provided to students who experience exceptional learning needs, often requiring modifications to the curriculum or teaching methods. Federal law, specifically the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), mandates that public schools provide a free appropriate public education, including special education services, to eligible children with disabilities.

Special Health Care Needs: A chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition(s) that may require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally. A special health care need may require medical management, health care intervention, and/or the use of specialized services or programs for a disability or chronic condition.

Unlicensed Assistive Personnel (UAPs): School employees who are trained to assist with certain basic nursing tasks but are not licensed healthcare professionals (e.g., licensed practical nurse, registered nurse, advanced nurse practitioner, medical provider). UAPs can help with tasks under the supervision or delegation of a licensed healthcare provider, such as a registered nurse, but do not have the authority to perform complex medical procedures or make medical decisions. Districts may employ nursing assistants, medical assistants, or EMTs as UAPs, provided they operate within scope-of-practice limits and delegation laws. Individuals with these credentials may function in the role of UAPs, **if hired as such**, and may receive delegation to perform tasks such as administering medications or performing clean intermittent catheterizations.