



SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAM
DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH – LIFESPAN HEALTH SERVICES
www.dhhs.ne.gov/SchoolHealth

School Health Screening Rules and Regulations: Project Update for Stakeholders #2
September 10, 2010

The Steering Committee for school health screening rules and regulations met on August 12, 2010.

The membership of the steering committee and the committee description have both been finalized. The one-page description is attached. Our membership is not representative of all stakeholders who are interested in, or potentially affected by, school health screening practices. The intent of the committee is to provide a process that allows visibility and input for all stakeholders.

Kathy Karsting shared results of a survey of principals and school nurses about screening practices, conducted in 2008, and summary results of focus group-style information gathering from school nurses about screening practices at schools. Brief reports of these are attached.

The steering committee is grappling with the role of the school in screening practices, noting particularly the following limitations: a school is not a medical or health care provider; screening is not diagnostic but only preliminary in identifying the child who should be evaluated further by a health care provider; from a statewide perspective some local areas are identified as underserved by health professions, and this poses a potential barrier to school screening practices.

We began to consider the subject of “qualified screener,” looking briefly at a position statement from the American Speech Language and Hearing Association on “support personnel in audiology”. In addition to national-level recommendations and position statements from expert groups, the committee members will consider the example of Nebraska’s medication aide act, and regulations for schools, which incorporate the language of “competency determination” for school personnel by a licensed health care professional. The availability of health professionals in all areas of the state, both within local schools and in local communities, was also a topic as we discussed the potential feasibility of requirements for “qualified personnel.”

The committee examined two questions related to the scope of the screening statutes: Are all schools (public, private, parochial, home) to be included? And, do the screening statutes include preschool-aged children in schools? On the first question, the opening phrase of Neb. Rev. Stat. 79-248 reads “Every school district shall cause children under its jurisdiction to be separately and carefully inspected...” The phrase “school district” applies only to public schools. On the second question, the committee will explore definitions existing in state laws and regulations that may provide useful and applicable definitions. When a pre-kindergarten child is enrolled in a school-located early childhood or preschool program, is it reasonable to consider that child to be under the jurisdiction of the district.

On the subject of frequency of screening, e.g. how often and when a child should be screened for hearing deficits, the committee will look at recommendations from national expert groups, particularly the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Next scheduled meeting of the steering committee is Sept. 23, 2010.

Kathy Karsting, RN, School and Child Health Program Manager for DHHS, serves as contact person and facilitator for the rules and regulations steering committee. Contact her at kathy.karsting@nebraska.gov.

Current members of the committee are: Kay Pinkley, Maria Hines, and Sue Spanhake (DHHS), Tammy Dean and Jan Thede (school nurses), Dr. Karla Lester (pediatrician), Julie Rother (public health), Brian Halstead (Dept. of Education), Dr. John Skretta (school administrator), Brian Hale (NE Assoc. of School Boards), and Jill Bates (Educational Service Units).