

SCHOOL PHYSICIANS

(Last Reviewed February 2005)

History	Role of the School Physician
Suggested Qualifications	Statute (Title 20-A)
Resources	

History: Since 1985, school administrative units have been required to appoint a school physician. School physicians play an important role in the school district's health program. The school physician functions as part of a health team addressing health issues of the student population in the school district. Working collaboratively with school administration, school health advisory councils and school nurses, school physicians can have an influential role in implementing effective health programs that reach all children in the district.

Although the school nurse is generally the primary provider of health services within a school (and school-based health centers for those schools with centers), the school physician plays a critical role in guiding the policies and practices of health services provided at school.

Role of the School Physician:

- Assist in the development/revision of school health and safety policies and procedures.
 - Assists in emergency care planning for the school district.
- Provides medical consultation to the school nurses, school administration, and school health advisory committees.
 - ○ Meets regularly with school nurses to review school health issues.
 - ○ Provides consultation on issues of school health; e.g.. environmental health, food service, health education.
 - ○ Develops standing orders as necessary.
- Participates on the school health advisory committee.
- Acts as liaison between community physicians and the school.
 - ○ Advocates for school health programs.
 - ○ Interprets the role of school health to healthcare providers and community.
 - ○ Provides information regarding health issues to the school board, as appropriate.
- School physicians may also act as medical directors for School-based Health Centers. (Please refer to the Maine Standards for School-based Health Centers).

It is encouraged that sports physicals be conducted by the student's Primary Care Provider in the context of a comprehensive physical examination and not included as part of the school physician's duties.

Suggested Qualifications:

- Licensed by the Board of Medicine in Maine.
- Board Certified in Pediatrics, Family Medicine, or Internal Medicine/Pediatrics.
- Knowledgeable in School-based Health and/or Public Health
- A strong interest in children's health.

It is important that school physicians become familiar with school culture, structure and language.

Physicians and school administrators should negotiate a contract that depicts the specific role of the physician with the school.

State Statute for School Physician:

MRSA Title 20-A: §6402-A. School physician

Each school board shall appoint one or more school physicians.

1. Duties. The school physician shall advise the administrative unit on school health issues, policies and practices and may also perform any other health-related functions assigned by the board.

2. Other functions. A school physician may perform other medical and health-related duties assigned by the school board which may include all or some of the following:

- A. Examine and diagnose students referred by teachers and other school employees to protect against the outbreak of contagious diseases in the schools;
- B. Examine students for participation in physical education and athletic activities;
- C. Advise and serve as medical consultant to the school nurse; or
- D. Examine school employees and property if the physician believes it is necessary to protect the health of students.

3. Prohibition. A school physician may not treat any student examined under this subchapter unless the physician is also the student's personal physician.

4. Appointment. Appointment shall be on a yearly basis.

Resources:

Health, Mental Health and Safety Guidelines for School – School

Physician <http://www.nationalguidelines.org/guideline.cfm?guideNum=4-04>

The Role of the School Physician in the Opening of School

<http://www.schoolhealth.org/article.cfm?contentID+38>

SBHC Standards

www.maineeshp.com

School Health at the AAP

<http://www.schoolhealth.org/index.cfm>

Nancy Dube, School Nurse Consultant
Department of Education
624-6688, Nancy.Dube@Maine.Gov