

The physical, social, and mental health concerns of youth have steadily risen in Maine over the past few decades. The COVID-19 pandemic escalated many of the social and mental health concerns of youth. School health services (SHS) are the activities provided by a health worker in the school setting so that students can attend school ready to learn. A recent needs assessment conducted by the Center for School Health & Innovation found Maine SHS infrastructure did not meet national standards and provided recommendations to address the gaps in the next 3-5 years.

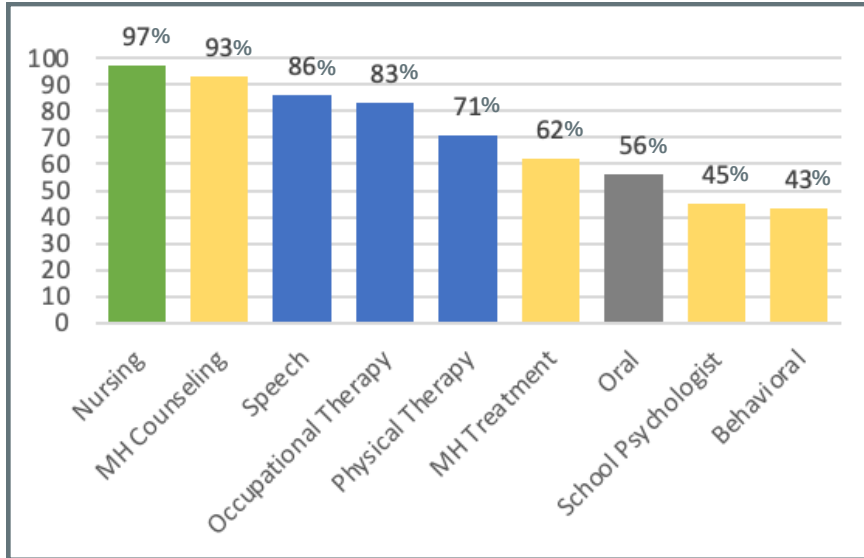


Figure 1. School Health Services Offered in Maine Schools. (MH=mental health)

■ Nursing Services
 ■ Mental/Behavioral Health  
■ Therapy Services
 ■ Oral Health Services

School health services delivery in Maine is similar to many Northeastern states where nurses (83% of respondents) cover just one school, while others cover multiple. Specialty providers (e.g. PT, OT, speech, mental health providers) are employed as well. School nurses should be registered nurses (RNs), although licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and unlicensed personnel can assist the RN. National recommendations indicate a school nurse should cover just one school.<sup>2</sup>

**83%**

of respondents say they do NOT bill MaineCare for reimbursable services. None bill for school nurse services. This is significantly less than the 42% nationally who bill Medicaid for nursing services.<sup>2</sup>

**Only 16%**

of survey respondents say they use a separate electronic health record (EHR). National standards indicate school nurses should use an EHR to document activities, monitor trends, & identify students at risk. EHRs facilitate the ability to bill Medicaid.<sup>3</sup>

**70%**

of respondents say that nurses in their district do not have a nurse supervisor. National standards indicate nursing supervision is essential for high quality, safe care, and to evaluate competent nursing practice.<sup>4</sup>

**School nurses are critical members of the school health team.** They use their knowledge & skill to manage student's chronic conditions, address health emergencies, provide prevention services and education, & connect schools with community partners (e.g. dentists, health care providers, food pantries) needed by students & their families. Many nurses plan to retire or leave school nursing in the next few years, causing additional staffing concerns.

Barriers for Maine meeting national standards and best practice include: Lack of policies, guidelines and directions; lack of understanding regarding the role of the school nurse; lack of electronic health records; lack of funding for adequate staff and resources.

1. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240029392>

2. Willgerodt, M., Tanner, A., & Brock, D. (July, 2023). School nurse workforce study 2.0: Understanding and elevating school nurses. Presentation at the Annual Conference of the National Association of School Nurses, Orlando, Florida.

3. <https://www.nasn.org/nasn-resources/professional-practice-documents/position-statements/ps-electronic-health-records>

4. <https://www.nasn.org/nasn-resources/professional-practice-documents/position-statements/ps-supervision>



## State Policies, Standards and Guidelines

Leverage Maine's State School Health Advisory Council to develop state SHS standards for:

- Staffing formula that is based acuity, social factors, and population.
- School Health Services Competencies.
- Terminology for mental health workers in the school.
- Expectations of school districts: community assessment, district infrastructure, nurse supervisor.
- Data collection points based on key school nurse indicators.



## Professional Development

- Develop a system-based Maine's Professional Evaluation and Professional Growth (PEPG) for student health needs.
- Expand school nurse certification (524) to include training of education setting and school-age health needs.
- Develop specific pre-teacher & principal training for use in university settings.
- Develop training (including video) for parents, teachers, administrators on the role of the school nurse.
- Develop mentoring & school nurse orientation programs, as well as coaching for school nurses.



## Electronic Health Record (EHR)

- Adopt a statewide EHR.
- Develop state standards for school EHRs.
- Develop learning groups and peer sharing of how to leverage the use of EHRs.



## Funding/MaineCare

- Investigate innovative funding models.
- Leverage state initiatives such as school-based health centers and pre-K expansion to include school nursing.
- Investigate earmarking funds from Maine's summer camps or tourism to fund school nursing.
- Create a state school Medicaid (MaineCare) Team to develop trainings, toolkits, website, templates, and technical assistance center regarding school-based Medicaid reimbursement.
- Advocate to expand Maine's MaineCare plan.
- Develop policies that direct reimbursed funds to support school health services, and for data to be used to identify trends and student need for re-enrollment.
- Assist districts in creating dashboards to track how reimbursement is used in the district.



## Innovation

- Partner with MDOE Office of Innovation to identify new models (staffing and funding) of school health.



## Pipeline and Retention

- Partner with Maine Office of Professional & Occupational Regulation to address shortage of school nurses and mental health professionals.
  - Investigate vocational programs that can be pipelines from school districts to Universities.
  - Create school health career clubs.
- Investigate local repayment programs to include school nursing.
- Identify benefits schools can provide to retain staff.