

Our Vision is for Georgia's Children to Be Healthy and to Learn to Be Healthy



Georgia's School Nurse Program

School nurses make a difference in the health of the 1,235,027 school children and staff of Georgia's school. Children must be healthy to learn and learn to be healthy.

Funding for school nurses in 2000 decreased the ratio of student to school nurse from 8800: 1 to ranges from 750:1 to 3000:1. The recommended ratio is 750:1.

- The School nurse is often the first health care resource that the child sees for health care, health care education, and referral if appropriate.
- In Georgia there are over 3 million visits to the school nurse for prescription medications and other health care problems.
- Chronic diseases in Georgia's children is increasing at a rate of 16-25% including: asthma, diabetes (both type I and II), heart disease, epilepsy, cancer, sickle cell disease, cystic fibrosis, obesity, autism, developmental disabilities and organ transplants.
- Medically fragile children requiring complex nursing care and technological support are now attending public schools. This includes children on ventilators, with feeding tubes, catheters and other devices.
- School nurses perform vision, hearing, dental and scoliosis screenings. These screenings detect health care problems that impact the students learning and their future health and well being.
- School nurses have the knowledge and skills to assess students and make appropriate referrals. As a result of school nurses assessments, 74% of students presenting to the clinic are returned to class to continue their learning.

Georgia's School Children need the \$30 Million in the budget for school nurses.

Numerous scenarios have depicted the impact that school nurses have had on the lives of Georgia's children.. Some of these include

- When the school nurse approached the secretary's desk she overheard the secretary tell a father who was holding his daughter in his arms to "take his daughter home and give her ginger ale, put her to bed, she probably has a bug." The father said this probably true. The nurse noted a very pale child. Her intuition and knowledge alerted her to ask more questions. She intervened by obtaining a history and assessment. The history revealed that there was a recent event where the child had a horse kick to the abdomen 2 days ago and had an ER visit. The school nurse encouraged the father to take the child to the ER. At the ER a liver laceration was diagnosed. She was treated in the Intensive Care Unit for several days. This nurse's intuition, assessment and referral probably saved this child's life.
- A school nurse noted a drastic weight loss of a 17 year old who was a cross country runner. She noted that other red flags such as frequent weighing, concern over weight gain, unwillingness to drink anything but water and decreased interactions with peers. The school nurse met with the student and she denied that anything was wrong. The nurse also met with the student's parents who denied that anything was wrong. In a few weeks, the school nurse was called to a classroom due to the collapse of this student. This was the student with rapid weight loss and continued isolation from peers. The student was diagnosed with dehydration, malnutrition, and electrolyte imbalance. The intuition, observation and actions of this nurse help to save this girl's life. The student's mother wrote a note to the principal saying "Thank you for having the foresight to hire a school nurse. She helped to save my daughter's life."