

¹What is an Individualized HealthCare Plan (IHP)?

It is the position of the US Department of Special Education that students whose healthcare needs affect or have the potential to affect safe and optimal school attendance and academic performance require the professional school nurse to write an Individualized Healthcare Plan (IHP), in collaboration with the student, family, educators, and healthcare care providers. It is also the position of the US Department of Special Education that it is the responsibility of the professional school nurse to implement and evaluate the IHP at least yearly to determine the need for revision and evidence of desired student outcomes.

The IHP is a written document that outlines the provision of student healthcare services intended to achieve specific student outcomes. The management of school healthcare services for students with significant or chronic health problems is a vital role for school nurses. The standard for this role is based on the nursing process and must include: Assessment, Nursing Diagnosis, Outcome Identification, Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation. Documentation of these steps for individual students who have healthcare issues results in the development of Individualized Healthcare Plans (IHPs), a variation of nursing care plans. IHPs fulfill administrative and clinical purposes including management of healthcare conditions to promote learning; facilitating communication, coordination, and continuity of care among service providers; and evaluation/revision of care provided (Herrmann, 2005). It is standard that the primary care physician will write the health protocol for the school nurse to implement upon his discretion and direction.

Chronic mental and physical health conditions or disabilities can interfere with school participation and achievement. Many students with stable conditions, such as attention deficit-hyperactivity or mild intermittent asthma, require basic school nursing services such as health care monitoring or medication administration. Some students need specialized services and require an IHP, which may include an emergency care plan (ECP) and/or a field trip plan. The need for an IHP is based on required nursing care, not educational entitlement such as special education or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. As the IHP is its own document it is simply attached to your child's IEP or 504Plan, based upon which support plan he/she is using.

¹Sometimes, students need the additional protections of federal laws in order to fully participate in an educational program. PL 93-112 Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (also called Section 504) identifies criteria that indicate accommodations may be required (504 plan) for an eligible student. PL 108-446 (2004), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) entitles students who are eligible for special education to receive services that are necessary to access or benefit from their educational program. Special healthcare services are outlined in the Individual Education Plan (IEP). For special education students, the IHP may be included as an attachment to the IEP.

These steps parallel components of a well-written IHP.

Standard 1. Assessment: The data collection phase helps determine the student's current health status and any actual or potential health concerns.

Standard 2. Diagnosis: The professional school nurse uses the assessment data to formulate a nursing diagnosis, including a diagnostic label, etiology, and presenting signs and symptoms.

Standard 3. Outcome Identification: The professional school nurse identifies the desired results of nursing intervention and states these in measurable terms.

Standard 4. Planning: Interventions are selected to achieve desired results.

Standard 5. Implementation: The written IHP is put into practice and care provided is documented.

Standard 6. Evaluation: The professional school nurse measures the effectiveness of nursing interventions in meeting the identified outcome. Changes are made to the plan as needed.

Your child's physician and the school nurse must determine which students require an IHP, prioritizing those students whose healthcare needs affect their daily functioning or safety. These students may have multiple healthcare needs, require lengthy procedures or treatments, require routine or emergency contact with the school nurse or unlicensed assistive personnel during the school day, or require special healthcare services as part of their IEP or Section 504 plan.

The registered professional school nurse and your child's physician are responsible and accountable for creating the individualized healthcare plan (IHP), for managing its activities, and for its outcomes, even when implementation of the plan requires delegation to unlicensed assistive personnel (NASNa, 2006).

The IHP is developed collaboratively with information from the family, the student, the student's healthcare providers, and school staff, as appropriate. The IHP includes medical orders implemented at school. Evaluation identifies progress toward achieving student outcomes. The IHP is reviewed at least annually, updated as needed, and revised as significant changes occur in the student's health status or medical treatment.

Standardized IHP's, printed or computerized, are available for common chronic pediatric health conditions. These standardized plans help promote continuity of care but individualization is essential in order to meet the unique needs of each student.

RATIONALE:

Professional school nurses are leaders in the provision of special healthcare services. Through coordination of care among the school and the home, primary and specialty medical care, and clinics, school nurses ensure continuity of care across settings and minimize the risk for miscommunication (Taras et al., 2004). School nurses are also responsible for the training, direction, and supervision of both licensed and unlicensed personnel and the delegation of select nursing tasks as directed by individual state nurse practice acts (NASN & ANA, 2005). An IHP is the written document that captures these professional activities provided to individual students (Selekman, 2006).

1 > Foot note: information obtained at <http://www.ed.gov/index.jhtml>, NASN & ANA, 2005