

## Education, Licensure, and Certification of School Nurses

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### *Position Statement*

#### **NASN POSITION**

It is the position of the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) that every school-age child should have access to a registered professional school nurse (hereinafter referred to as the school nurse) who has a *minimum* of a baccalaureate degree in nursing from an accredited college or university and is licensed as a registered nurse through a board of nursing. These requirements constitute minimal preparation needed to practice at the entry level of school nursing (American Nurses Association [ANA] & NASN, 2017). Additionally, NASN (n.d.) supports state school nurse certification/licensure and endorses national certification of school nurses through the National Board for Certification of School Nurses.

#### **BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE**

To respond to the increasing demands for public health nursing, the American Academy of Nursing (Kub et al., 2017) and the National Advisory Council of Nurse Education and Practice (2016) recommends that nurses attain advanced education. The *Public Health Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice* states that the minimum preparation for beginning professional nursing practice in public health is a baccalaureate degree in nursing (ANA, 2013). School nursing is founded in public health nursing and is defined as follows:

[A] specialized practice of nursing [which] protects and promotes student health, facilitates optimal development, and advances academic success. School nurses, grounded in ethical and evidence-based practice, are the leaders who bridge health care and education, provide care coordination, advocate for quality student-centered care, and collaborate to design systems that allow individuals and communities to develop their full potentials (ANA & NASN, 2017).

School nursing is further outlined in the *Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Nursing Practice* emphasizing evidence-based, clinically competent, quality care (NASN, 2016). A nursing baccalaureate degree best prepares nurses for school nursing practice, including the ability to lead school health programs, advocate for students and families, and provide individual and population-based care (ANA & NASN, 2017).

To enter professional registered nurse practice, nursing graduates must pass the National Council Licensure Examination for the Registered Nurse (NCLEX-RN). Licensure protects the public by indicating that a nurse successfully completed an examination that demonstrated a minimal level of competency to practice.

In addition to nursing licensure, post-baccalaureate education, including school nurse licensure or certification, may be required by state departments of education to practice school nursing. Specialty certification demonstrates expertise in a focused area of practice (Coelho, 2019). Requirements for state certification and the certifying bodies vary by individual state or territory in which a school nurse practices. In 1984, NASN developed a national certification examination and established the National Board for Certification of School Nurses (2018) to promote and recognize quality practice in school nursing and to assure that certification criteria and examinations in school nursing are determined by school nurse experts.

Registered nurses in the specialty practice of school nursing require advanced skills to competently address the complex health needs of students within a school community setting (ANA & NASN, 2017). These skills are attained through a minimum of a baccalaureate degree in nursing and validated by specialized certification in school nursing.

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