

Glossary of School Health Professionals

The professionals who work to maintain and improve students' physical and mental health — school health professionals — each provide a unique service to students, schools and education systems. As students' overall health influences their ability to attend school and consistently engage in learning, it is crucial that education leaders understand these important, and often distinct, functions.

While individual states may articulate the roles and functions of these professionals in somewhat different ways, this resource outlines some common defining features of various school health professional roles and functions. The information presented here is based on content from school health professional associations and related sources and addresses a limited set of common school health professional types. Other types of school health professionals not covered in this glossary include behavior analysts, school nutritionists, occupational therapists and speech-language pathologists, among others.

SCHOOL COUNSELORS

are certified/licensed educators who implement programs to help all students apply academic strategies, manage emotions, apply interpersonal skills and plan for postsecondary options. School counselors may conduct a variety of duties, including individual academic planning and goal setting; short-term counseling and referrals for longer-term support; and collaboration with families, educators and the community.

RECOMMENDED RATIO: 1 for every 250 students

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION:
American School Counselor Association

SCHOOL NURSES

bridge health care and education by protecting and promoting student health, facilitating optimal student development and advancing students' academic success. Some key duties include providing care coordination across multiple service providers, advocating for quality student-centered care, and collaborating to design systems that allow individuals and communities to develop to their full potential.

RECOMMENDED RATIO: 1 for every 750 students for the general population; ratios differ based on population type.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION:
National Association of School Nurses

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

are trained mental health professionals who apply expertise in mental health, learning and behavior to help students succeed academically, socially, behaviorally and emotionally. School psychologists partner with families, teachers, school administrators and other professionals to create safe, healthy and supportive learning environments. Some key duties include providing direct support and interventions to students; consulting with teachers, families and other school mental health professionals to improve support strategies; working with school administrators to improve schoolwide practices and policies; and collaborating with community providers to coordinate services.

RECOMMENDED RATIO: 1 for every 500-700 students

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION:
National Association of School Psychologists

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS

are trained mental health professionals who can work in collaboration with students, parents and educators to address mental health concerns, behavioral issues, and academic and classroom supports. School social workers provide leadership in developing school discipline policies, mental health intervention strategies, crisis management plans and related support services; they may also provide individual or group counseling or therapy.

RECOMMENDED RATIO: 1 for every 250 students

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION:
School Social Work Association of America

In 2019, most enacted bills related to school health professionals addressed **DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**, **FUNDING**, **TRAINING** and/or **RATIO REQUIREMENTS**.

Colorado H.B. 19-1203

creates the school nurse grant program to award grants to local education providers to hire school nurses in public schools.

Nevada S.B. 555

requires a portion of funds appropriated to the school safety account to be transferred to schools for block grants for social workers or other licensed mental health professionals.

Texas H.B. 684

requires a school nurse to complete an agency-approved online course on managing seizure disorders in their student population.

Minnesota H.F. 400

provides that a licensed school nurse may be authorized to administer an opioid antagonist in the event of an overdose.

Arkansas H.B. 1573

provides that students with special health care needs must develop an individualized health care plan in collaboration with school nurses.

Illinois S.B. 455

requires the state board of education to develop a training curriculum for school nurses and administrators on the administration of cannabis-infused, medical products to students who are registered, qualifying patients.

Maryland H.B. 844

requires local school systems to report on their ratio of students to school psychologists, strategies to reach or maintain ratios of no less 1-to-700, policies to decrease wait times for students and strategies to increase recruitment and retention of school psychologists.

Kentucky S.B. 1

encourages schools to aim to employ at least one school counselor per school — with a ratio goal of 1-to-250 — and sets a goal of each counselor spending at least 60% of their time in direct service to students.

