**Levels of Nursing Care for Student Diseases & Conditions: Severity Coding**

Students attend school with a broad range of health conditions, from potentially life-threatening acute and chronic conditions to correctable vision problems and everything in between which could impede the student’s ability to fully participate in the educational process. Severity Code is a method for planning adequate staffing to meet the varying needs of students.

Severity of condition does not always translate directly into nursing time with the students. Many students with significant chronic conditions predictably require daily nursing time. For example, a student with spina bifida who is not yet independent with urinary bladder management requires 40 minutes every day of the nurse’s time for catheterizations at the same time every school day. Other students such as those with severe asthma may experience an acute asthma attack and require nursing assessment and care at any time during the school day.

Examples of treatments/intervention that may be performed in schools at all levels of severity are (these are only a few examples and not meant to be an all-inclusive list);

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| Blood glucose testing  Continuous oxygen administration  Dressing changes  Gastric tube feeding  Intermittent oxygen administration  Laboratory tests  Medication Management  Monitor blood pressure  Monitor Disability | Monitor illness  Monitor weight  Nebulizer treatments  Peak flow monitoring  Sterile bladder catheterization  Suctioning  Toileting  Tracheostomy Care  Unsterile bladder catheterization |

In order to plan, care for, and monitor the students with special health needs, the school nurse will assign each qualifying student to a level of care based on the following categories: 1. **No/minimal occasional healthcare concerns, 2. healthcare concerns, 3. medically complex, 4. medically fragile, and 5. nursing dependent**. This model is to be used in conjunction with severity coding which establishes the nursing staff needs of students within a school building. Each semester the nurse staffing needs are to be re-evaluated and staff adjustments made based on the current requirement.

Level 1 – 1:750 Nurse to Student Ratio

No healthcare concerns identified. The student’s physical and/or social-emotional condition is stable and sees the Nurse at least once a year for screening and occasionally as needed.

Number of students in Level 1

Level 2 – 1:400 Nurse to Student Ratio

Health concerns require an Individualized Healthcare Plan (IHP) The student’s physical and/or social-emotional condition is currently uncomplicated and predictable. Occasional monitoring varies from biweekly to annually. Examples include, but are not limited to:

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| Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder with  medication  Activities of Daily Living  Clean Urinary Catheterization  Dental Disease  Diabetes self-managed by the student  Dietary restrictions | Eating disorders  Encopresis  Sensory impairments  Tube feeding  Orthopaedic conditions requiring accommodations  Uncomplicated Pregnancy |

Number of students in Level 2

Number of students in Level 3

Level 3 – 1:225 Nurse to Student Ratio

**Medically Complex**: The medically complex student has a complex and/or unstable physical and/or social-emotional condition that requires daily treatments and close monitoring by a professional registered nurse. Life threatening events are unpredictable. Treatments, medications, and reporting of current signs & symptoms can be delegated, but delegation requires a trained, wiling and competent staff person and close supervision of that staff person by a registered nurse. The level of supervision required is determined by the R.N. but must be adequate to maintain safety and ensure competence of the direct caregiver. Adaptations of the medially complex student to the educational system must be negotiated and maintained with the student, family, school staff (classroom and administrative), and community health care providers.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

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| --- | --- |
| Anaphylactic event potential  Cancer  Complex mental or emotional disorders  Diabetic Routine Monitoring without  complications  Immune disorders | Moderate to severe asthma; inhaler at school  and peak flow meter Oxygen, continuous  or intermittent  Preteen or teenage pregnancy  Taking carefully timed medications  Taking medications with major side effects  Unstable metabolic conditions |

Level 4 – 1:125 Nurse to Student Ratio

**Medically Fragile**: Students with complex health care needs in this category face daily the possibility of a life-threatening emergency requiring the skill and judgment of a professional nurse. An individual health care plan of nursing care develop0ed by a registered nurse must be complete, current, and available at all times to personnel in contact with these children. This includes bus drivers for daily transportation and special events, sports coaches, and school personnel assigned to extracurricular activities**. Every child in this category requires a full-time nurse in the building.** Children in this category may be transported to school. This training must include the primary bus driver, the child, and back-up personnel. The registered nurse makes the decision of who will be trained and what level of preparation is required, and uses the nursing delegation principles described in the Arkansas School Nurse Guidelines.

Examples may include but are not limited to:

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| --- | --- |
| Severe seizure disorder, requiring medications  that can be administered only by a nurse  Severe asthma with potential for status  asthmaticus  Sterile procedures | Tracheostomy with frequent and/or  unpredictable suctioning  Unstable and/or newly diagnosed diabetic with  unscheduled blood sugar monitoring and  insulin injections. |

Every child in the medically fragile category requires a full-time nurse in the building. The nurse “is on the premises, is quickly and easily available and the patient [student] has been assessed by the licensed registered nursing prior to delegation of the duties to any caregiver.

Reasonable accommodation and provision of education and health services under Section 504 or under IDEA must be considered and addressed in each child’s individual health care plan.

Number of students in Level 4

Level 5 – 1:1 Nurse to Student Ratio

**Nursing Dependent**: Nursing dependent students require 24 hours/day, frequently one-to-one, skilled nursing care for survival. Many are dependent on technological devices for breathing, or example, a child on a respirator, and/or for continuous nursing assessment and intervention. Without effective use of medical technology and availability of nursing care, the student will experience irreversible damage or death. Before a student enters school, a registered nurse will complete a nursing assessment of the student and determine an appropriate plan of care/individual health care plan.

Immediate availability of the registered nurse on the premises and is within audible and visual range of the student and student has been assessed by the registered nurse prior to the delegation of duties to any care giver.

Number of students in Level 5