



Government of Samoa
Ministry of Health

SCHOOL NURSE POLICY

2018 - 2023

FOREWORD

Good health is essential for learning and cognitive ability. Healthy children learn better. In today's world, many diseases are entering our society, and taking our young generation to the brim of health problems. It is the wish of the Health Sector to ensure our young generations are healthy and access health services through its health promoting schools programme.

The WHO has identified childhood obesity as one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century, and is becoming a global problem “steadily affecting many low and middle income countries” especially in the urban area. “Overweight and obese children are likely to stay obese into adulthood and more likely to develop non-communicable diseases like diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases at a younger age” (WHO). Overweight and obesity, as well as their related diseases, are largely preventable. Prevention of childhood obesity therefore needs high priority”.

Samoa is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and this means the Government of Samoa has agreed to put children and their rights in the highest priority. We therefore are obligated to ensure that the rights of the children are upheld and the provision is made available for them to reach their full potential in all aspects of life including their health.

The School Nursing Policy draws on the understanding and experiences of health workers, educators and community members. This policy aims to promote the health of learners taking into consideration the overweight and obese status of young children, and ensure that all school children have access to health services. It is the belief that if we treat the young generation they become health conscious growing up.

I therefore, endorse the School Nursing Policy to be supported and implemented by all for the realization of the health vision of “A Healthy Samoa”.

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POLICY STATEMENT

Role of the School Nurse in Providing School Health Services

ABSTRACT

The school nurse plays an important role to provide expertise and oversight for the provision of school health services and promotion of health education. Using clinical knowledge and judgment, the school nurse “provides health education and care to students and staff, performs health screening, provides preventative services, early detection of problem, interventions and coordinates referrals to the hospital or private healthcare provider”¹. The school nurse serves as a liaison between the “school personnel, family, community and healthcare providers to advocate and foster health care and a healthy school environment”².

The role of the school nurse will ensure primary health care is provided at the school level. The school nurse will provide the basic initial treatment for the students. They will also monitor and enforce vaccination in schools to protect every child at school from vaccine prevalence diseases.

The Government of Samoa is committed to ensuring the health of all children in keeping with its vision of ‘Healthy Samoa for All’, both now and in the future. Children’s health and safety must be protected and they must be encouraged to thrive through effective policies and programs, community involvement and participation and family care and support as they hold the greatest potential for our country’s future³.

It is the aim of this policy to help young children understand and weave the concept of health prevention and wellness into their daily lives. Far too often the predominant approach to health and wellbeing focuses on medical treatment services, after the fact that for many Samoans who are sick and injured. At the same time we need to be mindful that health is more than about absence of disease, but extends to physical, mental and social wellbeing.

It should be noted that this policy will be implemented alongside the Child and Adolescent Health Policy 2013.

¹ National Association of School Nurses (2010)

² *ibid*

³ Ministry of Health (2014) Child and Adolescent Health Policy 2013

BACKGROUND

“Children are the future, and thus investing in children’s health and development means investing in the future of a country.”⁴ They are especially a vulnerable group of the population, and their needs and rights must be met and protected. This includes their health.

The school is the child’s second most influential place in life after the home. In schools, more and more students enter every year with health problems which teachers try to manage during the day. Schools also provide the opportunity to improve and maintain child health as they provide sites to provide health services to young people, and because they are settings where they spend most of their time⁵.

Samoa has a young population. Thirty-eight percent⁶ of the population is between the ages of 0-14 years old. The sex ration shows that there is more males than females in all ages⁷. The infant mortality rate is 15 per 1,000 live births⁸.

School Nursing supports the provision of quality health services in schools to promote student health and success. Nurses were a part of the school setting in the late 1900’s when they conducted student inspections to identify students with skin sores, communicable diseases needing treatment, provided nutrition and basic health care, and general hygiene for students. Schools were encouraged to conduct student hair, teeth, eyes, nails and ear inspections to ensure hygienic and healthy students. School Nurses also managed students with injuries and acute illnesses. School Nurses took care of immunization for Year One entrants. Some senior schools had School Matrons on site to care for the health and wellbeing of students during the course of the school day.

The presence of nurses in schools encouraged students to take care of their health and wellbeing, and gave parents and the community the assurance that the children were safe in the school environment and their health issues are dealt with promptly with the necessary care.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ISSUE

Preventing diseases before they start is critical to helping people live longer, healthier and keeping health costs manageable. Prevention of illness is a positive health behavior that includes but is not limited to immunization, adequate exercise, and nutrition. We also know too well that some of the strongest predictors of health and well-being fall outside of the direct health care setting, such as housing, education, transport, workplace and the environment that represents significant elements that impact health outcomes for young children.

⁴ Samoa Bureau of Statistics & Samoa Ministry of Health (2015) Demographic Health Survey 2014, page 163.

⁵ Ministry of Health (2014). Child and Adolescent Health Policy 2013

⁶ Samoa Bureau of Statistics & Samoa Ministry of Health (2015) Demographic Health Survey 2014, page 12

⁷ Ibid page 12

⁸ Ibid page 142

The school plays an important role in the life of a child. A student's health status is directly related to his or her ability to learn. Children with unmet needs have a difficult time engaging in the educational process.

- The school nurse supports students by providing health care through assessment, intervention, and follow-up for all children within the school setting.
- The school nurse addresses the physical, mental, emotional and social needs of students and supports their achievement in the learning process.
- The school nurse not only provides for the safety and care of students and staff but also to address the need to integrating health solutions into the education setting.

There is continuing concern for the rising prevalence of NCDs in particular its risk factors, but also the fact that these diseases are appearing in the young age groups with increasing numbers of presented cases on complications caused by these killer diseases. The increasing number of NCDs and infectious diseases means the young population is not immune to the risks posed by the NCDs. The 2013 STEP Survey conducted by the WHO and the MoH identified alarming rates for NCDs. It is the intention to prioritise prevention against targeted areas across multiple settings by integrating nutritional and health programmes

It has been noted that overcrowded schools are prone to spreading diseases the quickest during outbreaks. The probability of diseases spreading in these settings is high.

Child Obesity is an issue faced by many children. Children are the future, and thus, investing in children's health and development means investing in the future of a country. Children are an especially vulnerable group of the population whose needs must be met and rights must be protected, including the right to proper health, growth and development. Children's health is an important issue to be addressed at all levels: individual, family, larger community, national and international level.

School nurses perform a critical role within the school health program by addressing the major health problems experienced by children. This role includes providing preventive and screening services, health education and assistance with decision-making about health, and immunization against preventable diseases. In addition, school nurses may provide interventions for acute and chronic illness, injuries and emergencies, communicable diseases, obesity, substance use and abuse, adolescent pregnancy, mental health, dental disease, nutrition, and sexually transmitted infections. School nurses need to be physically present in schools to address these responsibilities appropriately. Improved student outcomes result where schools have a full-time school nurse. Inadequate staffing threatens the school nurse's role as medical home extender.

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL NURSE

School nursing has multiple components and the role of the school nurse is a broad one, dependent on many factors, including the school setting, health needs of the student population and the availability of specialised instructional student support services and programmes. The roles are overarching and are applicable to school nurses at all levels of practice, in all geographic settings, and with all clients.

The school nurse is a registered health care professional on site. The primary role of the school nurse is to support and provide health assessment for students and staff. The nurse accomplishes this by implementing strategies that promote student and staff health and safety and, wellbeing. As the health services expert, the school nurse serves as the health professional to the school.

Capturing the at-risk children in a school setting is also important and efficient way of addressing childhood diseases and risk factors given the limited number of health personnel rather than following up with individual families. The school nurse:

1. *Provides direct care to students.* The school nurse will provide support and care for student's injuries and acute illness and management of students with special health care needs. These responsibilities will involve assessment and treatment of injuries and illnesses within the scope and standards of professional nursing practice, clear and on-going communication with parents, referral to physicians, and the provision or supervision of prescribed nursing care. Individual health care plans will be developed where appropriate for students with chronic conditions like diabetes, hypertension and asthma. There should also be emergency plan to manage potential emergencies and disasters the students might encounter in the school.
2. *Provides leadership for the provision of health services.* The school nurse who is the health care expert in the school, monitors, evaluates and assesses the overall health care programme to ensure that health needs of the school students and teachers are met and cared for. The responsibilities include the development and management of emergency plans to respond to emergencies and disasters and to ensure the confidentiality of communication in relation to student health information. .
3. *Provides screening and referral for health conditions.* At the schools, Nurses will conduct health screenings and identify "students with potential underlying medical problems"⁹ and refer them for treatment as appropriate.
4. *Promotes health and safety and a healthy school environment.* The school nurse provides health-related information to students and staff alike in individual and group settings, and provides consultation to other school professionals, including food service personnel, physical education teachers, coaches, and counselors. The responsibilities in the provision of a safe and healthy school environment include the school nurse's monitoring of immunization, inspecting hygiene-related issues, managing communicable and non-communicable diseases, assessing the school environment for safety to prevent injury and take the lead in the promotion of infection control measures. It will also assist in enforcing the School Nutrition Standard now in place in the schools to promote health by encouraging the development of good eating habits and making healthy eating an easy, affordable choice for school communities..

⁹ American Academy of Pediatrics, Council on School Health (2010). School Health: Policy and Practice.7th edition.

5. *Advocate for health policies and programs.* The school nurse plays a pivotal role in the development and evaluation of school health policies particularly the School Nutrition Guideline currently being implemented in the schools. Compliance to this guideline also contributes to the success of the National Food and Nutrition Policy 2013-2018, the National Health Promotion Policy 2010-2015, the National Infection Control Policy 2011-2016 and the National Health Prevention Policy 2013-2018. The responsibilities of the school nurse includes promoting and raising the awareness of national health policies and development of school Policies on health promotion, education and protection; harmonized school health programs; school wellness policies, disaster management, emergency medical condition management, mental health protection and intervention, acute illness management, and infectious disease prevention and management.

KEY STRATEGIC AREAS

KSA 1: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Improving and maintain the health of young children and adolescents in Samoa will require the coordinated efforts of all sectors, not just the health sector. It also requires the coordinated work of the public, private, non-governmental organizations and the community. The Ministry of Health Act 2006 stipulates that the Ministry of Health is the lead Ministry to establish policies, legislation and regulations to ensure child and adolescent health.

One of the key partnerships that need to be strengthened is between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC). This relationship is important given the impacts of the environmental and the social factors on diseases and illnesses affecting young children today. In addition, students spend most of their day in the school environment and are prone to be affected by communicable and non-communicable diseases passed on from other students and the surrounding environment they are associated with. Furthermore, epidemics can easily spread in the school environment given the different backgrounds and profiles students bring to the school. The school also will be the avenue to enforce immunization in schools, and Year 1 entrants need to enroll using their immunization records.

KSA 2: HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY

The lead role in the provision of improved child health services at the school is the National Health Services. MoH and NHS will work together to establish service standards, monitor health service performance, administer programmes to the schools, and identify emerging child health needs and the appropriate responses.

The existence of a school nurse presents a good opportunity to improve and maintain children's health because they provide the necessary health services needed. The health and education sectors should continue to align their child health programmes and activities accordingly.

The Nurses will provide on-the spot treatment of ailments and sores, and offer health support for the schools. The coordination of the delivery of health care services to schools will be the responsibility of

the Ministry of Health with support from the National Health Services Community Nursing Unit to provide nurses to implement the programme. Funding for this programme will be incorporated into the daily routine of community programmes.

In addition, the School Nurse will monitor child immunization and ensure all immunization shots have been taken so that the child is protected from vaccine prevalence diseases such as polio, whooping cough (pertussis), diphtheria, tetanus, Hepatitis B, measles, mumps and rubella, Haemophilus influenzae type B¹⁰. This monitoring is compulsory for all new entrants, and is a requirement for students for admission and enrolment into a school.

KSA 3: HEALTH INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Improving child and adolescent health is a responsibility of everyone – the community, and the awareness and participation of families. Families need to be educated about the importance of their children’s health. MoH and NHS collaborate in mass media campaigns and other public awareness programmes related to child health issues. These efforts need to be continued and it requires the full awareness of the children’s caregivers.

The Health Promotion and Enforcement Division of the MoH are continuously implementing this role. In partnership with MESC, MoH has conducted the Health Promoting School Programme. Securing the political support of the Samoa Parliamentary Advocacy Group for Healthy Living (SPAGHL) makes Healthy Islands Setting approach more robust. Schools are proven to be effective entry points for health interventions. The Programme is founded on the belief that if children are educated about health and start making healthy choices early in life, they are more likely to carry health enhancing behaviours into adulthood.

Although a lot of work has been done with regards to public awareness, more work still needs to be implemented to further articulate the serious situation Samoa is facing with child health.

This programme will be used to monitor Child Health Indicators, and children’s’ Body Mass Index (BMI).

KSA 4: HEALTH FINANCING

The financing of the policy implementation will be sourced from the local budget through community nursing programmes, as this will be incorporated into outreach programmes of the Community Nursing Unit. The financial cost is particularly for human resources to increase nursing and medical human resources to sustain this service.

KSA 5: HUMAN RESOURCES

There is work provided by the nurses to the community, through district hospitals and village health centres and school health visits. It is therefore critical that sufficient human resources for health are available to guarantee that the service is provided and sustained.

¹⁰ Samoa Bureau of Statistics & Samoa Ministry of Health (2015) Demographic Health Survey, page 166

SCHOOL NURSE ACTIVITIES

The following health services are the minimum requirements that should be offered,

- Assessment of health complaints, medication administration, and care for students with special health care needs;
- A system for managing emergencies and critical situations;
- Mandated health screening programs, verification of immunizations, and infectious disease reporting;
- Identification and management of students' chronic health care needs that affect educational achievement;
- Enforcement of health related issues, ie. monitoring of water and sanitation, smoking and healthy eating / food;
- Monitor and enforce the vaccination of all school children; and
- Ensure all new entrants have completed all immunization requirements before being enrolled and admitted into a school.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is about tracking, collecting, storing, analyzing and finally transforming data into useful information so it can be used to make informed decisions to improve program management, policy formulation and advocacy.

The Ministry of Health through the Strategic Planning Policy and Research Division (SPPRD) in collaboration with the Health Sector Quality Assurance – Nursing and Midwifery Division (HSQA N&W) shall conduct the M&E and review of the School Nursing Policy 2018-2023 first at 2 ½ years and at the end of the life of the policy. The M&E report shall include the activities implemented during the 5 year period, the challenges faced during the implementation of programs and rolled-over activities.

CONCLUSION

The Government of Samoa through the Ministry of Health is committed to ensuring the health of all children in keeping with its vision of 'Healthy Samoa for All', both now and in the future. Children's health and safety must be protected and they must be encouraged to thrive through effective policies and programs, community involvement and participation and family care and support as they hold the greatest potential for our future.

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PILOT / TRIAL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The policy will be piloted in 6 Primary schools. The Nurse will spend about 2 hours per school on a rotational plan. The school will be visited every week. The schools for the pilot are:

SCHOOL	SCHOOL TYPE	¹¹ SCHOOL ROLL	¹² NUMBER OF TEACHERS	PROPOSED VISITING DAY
Falefitu Primary School	Government / Co-ed	299	10	Tuesday
Vaivase Primary School	Government / Co-ed	889	24	Tuesday
Vaimea Primary School	Government / Co-ed	610	20	Wednesday
St. Marys Primary School	Mission / Girls Only	939	30	Wednesday
Apia Primary School	Government / Co-ed	1392	25	Thursday
Samoa Primary School	Private / Co-ed	409	31	Thursday
Aele Primary School	Government / Co-ed			

Source: MESC

The pilot program is proposed to run for 3 – 4 months. An evaluation / review will be conducted after the pilot period to determine the way forward.

It is also proposed that the Nurse Orientees use this pilot phase as part of their training, to assist the Registered Nurse.

¹¹ Source – MESC

¹² Source – MESC

PLAN OF ACTION

OUTCOME	ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBLE	COSTING	SOURCE OF FUNDS
GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP				
<i>Improved partnership commitments amongst sector partners and school communities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote partnership and improve governance and leadership to improve child health Health Promoting School Network to assist in monitoring and overseeing the implementation of the School Nursing Policy Monitor the provision of child and adolescent health services at the schools to ensure accessibility and of high quality Develop and promote public health policies Review the implementation after the trial/pilot period Enforce Immunization Record (Child Book) as enrolment requirement 	Lead: MoH Support: NHS, Nursing Association, MESC		Local Budget
OUTCOME	ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBLE	COSTING	SOURCE OF FUNDS
HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY				
<i>Increased access to quality health care</i> <i>Improve health care delivery to all children and adolescents in schools through a</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Child Health Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure supportive, enabling and injury free school environments in schools Strengthen community action to promote healthy eating and physical 	Lead: MoH & NHS Support: MESC, School Communities, Private GPs		Local Budget

<p><i>primary health care approach</i></p> <p><i>Improve access of children to quality health care</i></p>	<p>activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen referral system • Ensure universal immunization coverage for all children in Samoa • Provide on-the spot treatment of ailments and sores • Offer health support for the schools 			
OUTCOME	ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBLE	COSTING	SOURCE OF FUNDS
HEALTH INFORMATION AND AWARENESS				
<p><i>Increase awareness amongst parents, guardians and caregivers on emerging and re-emerging child health issues</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness on child health issues (communicable and non-communicable diseases, vaccine prevalence diseases) • Encourage and enforce smoke free schools programmes and policies • Ensure adherence of schools to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Nutrition Standards • School Sanitations Guidelines • Educate the community, parents, guardians and caregivers on injury prevention within the home and school environment • Promote child health issues through media and community programmes • Increase awareness of 	<p>Lead: MoH</p> <p>Support: MESC, NHS</p>		<p>Local Budget</p> <p>WHO Biennium</p>

	parents, caregivers, guardians on the signs and symptoms of the different kinds of disabilities			
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