



NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

School Health Support Personnel
Professional Entry Report

Section 7.7 of S.L. 2021-180

Date Due: September 15, 2022
DPI Chronological Schedule, 2021-2022

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I. Policy, Practices Standards, and Curriculum Overview

For purposes of this report, the term "school health support personnel" refers to school psychologists, school counselors, school nurses, and school social workers. Each of these professions are specialized to practice and be employed in all NC public school units. The requirements vary and can be compared in the following table.

Profession	Education/Training Required/Minimum Time to Meet Requirements	Practicum/ Internship	Licensure/ certification	Link to Professional Standards
School Counseling	Master's Degree in School Counseling from CACREP accredited program Praxis Exam for School Counseling	Practicum (semester) Internship (1year)	DPI Professional Educators License	EVAL 026: Evaluation Standards and Criteria: School Counseling
School Nursing	Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Requirement to complete BSN within 3 years.	N/A	RN licensure by NC Board of Nursing upon hire. Certification required within 3 years of hire by the National Board for the Certification of School Nurses	NC Nurse Practice Act School Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice, 4th Edition
School Psychology	Advanced degree in School Psychology and qualifying score of 147 or higher on ETS/Praxis 5402 - School Psychologist	Practicum (1 year) plus Internship (1 year)	DPI issued Professional Educators License	EVAL-025: Evaluation Standards and Criteria: School Psychologists (eboardsolutions.com)

School Social Work	Bachelor's or Master's degree of social work School social work specialty program at approved NC Educator Preparation Program Requirements can be met in 4 years minimum	1 year internship	DPI Professional Educators License	Eval Professional -027 North Carolina School Social Work Standards
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There is an undeniable important connection between the mental and physical health of students and their ability to learn. Schools' ability to meet the needs of their students is dependent on the strength of their school health support personnel: school social worker, nurse, counselor, and psychologist. However, in NC, funding for these positions is insufficient, so the recommended student-staff ratios are not being met. Current ratios are shown below with the recommended number in parentheses.

- School Counselors = **1:335** (1:250)
- School Nurses = **1:890** (1:per school)
- School Social Workers = **1:1,025** (1:250)
- School Psychologists = **1:1,815** (1:500)

II. Methods For Gathering Comprehensive Scope Of Problem

There are additional barriers to these personnel entering the profession. They also vastly vary by profession. In compliance with [Session Law 2021-180 Senate Bill 105](#) (pgs.59-60), NCDPI requested feedback on barriers and recommendations for school health support personnel entering or employed in the profession. Respondents range from NC educator preparation faculty to supervisors and directors over these personnel, to these personnel themselves, and related stakeholders. The state level consultants for all of these professionals also provided insights related to barriers and recommendations. Feedback from 195 respondents is summarized in the next section.

III. Barriers and Recommendations to Entering the Profession

School Counseling

In the area of practice, concerns arise for school counselors performing inappropriate non-counseling duties. Performing such duties like 504 coordination and teacher classroom coverage interferes with their ability to provide direct service delivery of a comprehensive school counseling program to students. In addition, alignment of state and district role expectations of school counselors would eliminate inappropriate use of time for school counselors in non-counseling related duties.

School counselors develop comprehensive school counseling programs in accordance with the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) standards. There are currently separate state standards for school counselors. The survey data collected supports the belief that there should not be differing state standards, but rather an adoption of the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success.

Recommendations to reduce/eliminate barriers for school counselors:

- Increase salary scale to match that of school psychologists, speech pathologists and/or principals
- Reduce school counselor to pupil ratio to recommended ratio of 1:250

School Nursing

The National Association of School Nurses recommends that students have access to a registered professional nurse all day, every day. Appropriate staffing levels should be determined by assessing student acuity and school community indicators. The survey data feedback recommends the state salary band for school nurses to be more comparable with nurses in other professional settings and differentiated from the classroom teacher pay scale. In addition, it is recommended that the school nurses shift from classified employees to certified employees. School nurses receive decreased pay when they transition into school settings until they receive their National School Nurse Certification.

It is a current practice of school nurses to review school health records. However, when health records do not meet compliance regulations, school nurses lack the power to enforce these regulations. Better consistency is needed to ensure health assessments and immunizations are in compliance.

For school nurses to effectively practice their standards, one school nurse should be assigned to each school. Standards of practice are written within the framework of the nursing process and are consistent with the North Carolina Board Of Nursing requirements and regulations for practice. Applying the rules and regulations related to the scope of practice in the school setting can be challenging, since the school nurse often works in relative isolation as an independent practice professional and must be self-accountable. The school community is best served by a well-informed professional school nurse who is working to the full extent of their allowed scope.

The educational preparation programs requirements are lengthy and time-consuming for school nurses. They are required to have BSN and gain pediatric hours within a three-year time period, which is difficult to accomplish. Preceptorships and mentors with a School Nurse educator involved with programs would help with retention.

Recommendations to reduce/eliminate barriers for school nurses are:

- Increase salary for school nurses to be comparable to nurses in other settings on a certified pay scale versus a classified pay scale
- Increase funding for more school nurse positions in LEA's
- Reduce school nurse to pupil ratio to recommended ratio of one school nurse per school

School Psychology

School psychologists to student ratios are extremely high, and decreasing these ratios to the national recommended standard would allow better delivery of services from school psychologists. Also, the National Association of School Psychologists requires a minimum of sixty hours of graduate study for training standards, however, the state salary for school psychologists is not commensurate for this training in NC. Therefore, an increase in salary for school psychologists by legislation would help with retention and recruitment for school psychologists positions.

High caseloads for school psychologists make it difficult for standards to be met for evaluations. A great amount of their time is spent supporting exceptional children's needs, opposed to delivery of a comprehensive program consisting of direct services, consultations, and evaluations.

North Carolina does not have enough educational preparation programs to support the field and needs of school psychologists. These programs have small cohorts that usually consist of 6-10 students, who often become employed in other states due to higher paying salaries. Allowance for qualifying licenses

from other states would increase recruitment of more school psychologists for our state.

Recommendations to reduce/eliminate barriers for school psychologists are:

- Increase salary scale to be comparable with surrounding states
- Reduce school psychologist to pupil ratio to recommended ratio of 1:550
- Continue with Forgiveness Education Loan (FEL) program opportunities

School Social Work

School social worker job descriptions need to be updated in legislation and a legislative mandate in districts to employ one school social worker per school. Lack of master's pay in comparison to other school health personnel and inability to utilize clinical licensure in school settings impacts retention of school social workers.

The practice of school social workers is primarily related to addressing attendance and not the full scope of their work. Lack of well-defined role clarification prevents them from delivering needed mental health services to students. In the area standards, school social workers are not adequately evaluated on their full service delivery due to their evaluations aligning more with the work of classroom teachers.

Recommendations to reduce/eliminate barriers for school social worker are:

- Compensation for advanced degrees and restoration of master's pay for school social workers with class "M" NCDPI licensure
- Reduced school social worker to pupil ratio to recommended ratio of 1:250
- Increase funding to employ one school social worker per school

IV. Conclusion

School health support personnel carry a vital role in providing comprehensive services to meet the physical and mental health needs of children to produce optimal academic performance outcomes. To ensure successful service delivery, there are recommendations that would leverage the sustainability of school health support personnel in North Carolina schools. First, reducing student ratios to the recommended ratios of each profession would aid in manageability of student caseloads and effectively meet professional standards. Secondly, employing at least one school social worker, school psychologist and school nurse would strengthen on site student support services teams. Thirdly, funding for increased and competitive salaries would increase retention and recruitment

rates for these positions. Lastly, clear job descriptions would protect school health support personnel from engaging in inappropriate job duties.