

# FROM THE DESK OF YOUR SCHOOL NURSE

## A FEW THINGS WE'D LIKE EDUCATORS TO KNOW

Just like you, school nurses and their office staff share a deep commitment to ensuring our educational environments are safe and conducive to learning and growth. As we enter the new school year, here are a few things we ask educators to keep in mind.

**Hand washing and sanitizing are still crucial.** One of the most important things you can do to help keep students healthy and prevent the spread of illness is encourage proper handwashing and hygiene. You might have to remind students to wash their hands often, especially in the early months of back-to-school and after a summer of possibly having different hand washing habits at home.

**Loop us in on what's happening in students' lives.** We know you build strong relationships with your students and often their parent(s) or caregiver(s) too. When you learn about a change in a student's life, please let the school nurse know. Changes or challenges at home, like a new sibling, death of a loved one, or anxiety about social issues can all play into students' health. If you learn the student has sustained an injury, such as a fall or sports injury, please communicate it to the nurse. When we understand the whole picture in a student's life, better care is delivered.

**If you do have contact with a student's parent(s) or caregiver(s) and you know the student is experiencing health challenges, a warm handoff to connect the school nurse to the parent/caregiver makes a big difference.** This can be as simple as an email to the parent/caregiver with a cc to the school nurse—then we can jump in and take the conversation from there. If you send a note home to the parent/caregiver, you can also let us know, so when we reach out to the parent, we can reference the communication from you. This helps us build trust and connection with the parent/caregiver, and ultimately results in better care for the student.

**We remain vigilant about preventing the spread of illnesses.** If a student seems to be exhibiting signs of



sickness or is injured, it's best to err on the side of caution and send them to the school nurse's office. A fever, cough, runny nose, sore throat, fatigue, headaches, and muscle pains warrant a trip to the nurse's office for evaluation. However, there are certain times when a student should not be sent to us. If they are simply feeling irritable, tired, hungry, or thirsty, or having a minor complaint, they likely don't need to see the nurse. Of course, every situation is different, so always use your best judgment.

**Concerns about anxiety and mental health are taken seriously.** Anxiety or a stomach ache can be a sign of a larger issue. Don't be afraid to send a student to the school nurse's office so we can help understand the situation. We'll ask questions about what's happening in school and at home to help us better understand what's going on. Having a connection with you and with students' parent(s) or caregiver(s) is a big help when we're aiming to evaluate the whole situation. In most cases, the student will return to class with coping strategies we can provide; in some cases, we may refer the student to the school counselor or a mental health professional.

**School nurses may rotate to different buildings and split time between locations.** Please be aware of your school nurse's rotation schedule, emergency contact info, and protocol in case an urgent health issue might arise during any given school day. **Like teachers, your school nurse likely has a contracted planning period scheduled every day.** During this time, the only student contact should be true emergencies.

### DETAILS TO NOTE:

School nurse name: \_\_\_\_\_ Additional team member names: \_\_\_\_\_

Office phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Rotation or schedule details: \_\_\_\_\_