

## **CREDENTIALLED SCHOOL NURSES**

Adopted by Convention Delegates April 30, 2005

- WHEREAS, The credentialed school nurse, with specialized medical background, academic preparation and professional skill, is a school staff member especially qualified to strengthen the educational process through improvement of the health status of students and to develop and provide leadership for the school site's comprehensive school health program, and
- WHEREAS, The American Federation of Teachers, the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the California State PTA recommend that each school have available the services of a credentialed school nurse, and
- WHEREAS, Chronic illnesses among children in California are increasing and obesity has been identified as a major health crisis in our state and nation, and the incidence among children is increasing at a rapid rate; and
- WHEREAS, Virtually all of California's public schools have students with asthma, many have children who need emergency injections for severe allergies or migraine headaches, nearly half have children who need blood glucose monitoring and approximately one-quarter have children that need insulin injections at school; and
- WHEREAS, Under Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, students with disabilities have the right to receive a free appropriate public education, which includes reasonable accommodations required for the management of chronic medical conditions and numerous children in regular public school classrooms in California have conditions which require special nursing procedures or monitoring; and
- WHEREAS, Section 49400 of the California Education Code states "the governing board of any school district shall give diligent care to the health and physical development of each pupil, and may employ properly certified persons for that purpose"; and
- WHEREAS, In California the student to credentialed school nurse ratio far exceeds the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommendation of 750:1 in regular student populations and 100:1 in special needs student populations, and
- WHEREAS, Optimal chronic disease management and injury prevention will decrease school absenteeism and increase student achievement; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to inform students, parents, school and district staff and the community about the lack of credentialed school nurses in California's public schools; and be it further

**RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to work with local school districts to assess and determine the health and safety needs of the students in their communities and to determine the number of credentialed school nurses needed to safely and effectively provide the necessary care for students; and be it further

**RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to work with their local school districts to ensure that policies are enacted to provide appropriate health and prevention services by credentialed school nurses; and be it further

**RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to work with policy makers, public health agencies and local school districts, to ensure that adequate funding is available to provide appropriate health services by credentialed school nurses in California's schools; and be it further

**RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA, its units, councils and districts urge school districts to fulfill the recommendation, under Section 49400 of the California Education Code, that credentialed school nurses be employed to meet the health needs of students.

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## **BACKGROUND SUMMARY**

Many of the health challenges facing young people today are different from those of past decades, therefore it is imperative to support school health programs to improve the health status of young people. A majority of elementary school children are obese. An increasing number of children and adolescents are developing Type 2 diabetes, a disease usually diagnosed in adults aged 40 years and older. Asthma has become a leading cause of school absences and hospital admissions. These factors are demonstrated by the following statistics:

- ◆ 26.5% of California's 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> graders are considered overweight
- ◆ In California, 1 in every 300-600 children, or approximately 15,000 school-aged children is diagnosed with diabetes
- ◆ An estimated 13.7 % to 16.3% of California children between 6-17 years of age have been diagnosed with asthma, representing approximately one million children
- ◆ In 2001, nearly 136,000 California adolescents with asthma missed one or more days of school per month
- ◆ In regular classrooms throughout California numerous children have special needs including gastroenterology feeding tubes, oxygen administration, tracheal suctioning and monitoring for seizures.

In July 2002 the American Federation of Teachers adopted a resolution calling for a fulltime school nurse in every school building. The California State PTA, in a 1977 resolution "Credentialed School Nurses," encouraged school districts to make available to each school the services of a credentialed school nurse. Similarly, the National Association of Elementary School Principals advocates for a school nurse in every school. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends and supports the continued strong partnership among school nurses, other school health personnel, and pediatricians to promote the health of children and youth by facilitating the development of a comprehensive school health program.

Despite the widespread recognition of the critical need for school nurses, essential public health investments in school nursing have declined in many school districts in California. During the 2002-2003 school year, there were 6,244,403 children in the public schools and 2,466 school nurses, a ratio of one credentialed school nurse to every 2532 students, while the nationally recommended ratio is 1:750 for regular education students and 1:100 for special needs pupils. There are too few school nurses in our schools to care for the children who rely on them. Many parents are completely unaware that there is no credentialed school nurse or certified health professional in their child's school.

In addition to goals relating to the importance of safeguarding the health and safety of California students, investments in school nursing pay off both financially (by reducing absenteeism, controlling liability risk and increasing revenue) and in academic achievement, as research shows clear connections between improved student health and gains in student achievement. Credentialed school nurses are critical to ensure that our children are healthy, able to learn and learn to be healthy.

*Following the adoption of this resolution by delegates to the 2005 California State PTA Annual Convention, the resolution "Credentialed School Nurses" (1977) will be placed in the California State PTA Resolutions Book Historical File.*