



# **School Nurse Definition, Licensure, and Certification**

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# **School Nurse Definition, Licensure, and Certification**

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# Definition and Education

The [National Association of School Nurses](#) (NASN) defines school nursing as: *a specialized practice of nursing which protects and promotes student health, facilitates optimal development, and advances academic success. School nurses, grounded in ethical and evidence-based practice, are the leaders who bridge health care and education, provide care coordination, advocate for quality student-centered care, and collaborate to design systems that allow individuals and communities to develop their full potentials.* The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (AAP) recognizes the important role school nurses play in promoting the optimal biopsychosocial health and well-being of school-aged children in the school setting.

School nursing is further outlined in [NASN's Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Nursing Practice](#) emphasizing evidence-based, clinically competent, quality care. The NASN recommends the [minimum qualifications](#) for a professional school nurse should include licensure as a registered nurse and a baccalaureate degree in nursing from an accredited college or university.

Wisconsin state law [Wis. Stat sec. 115.001\(11\)](#) defines a school nurse as a registered nurse licensed under [Wis. Stat. ch. 441](#) or who holds a multistate license, as defined in s. [441.51\(2\)\(h\)](#), issued in a party state, who completes a course in public/community health if they do not have a bachelor's degree in nursing. See [Wis. Stat sec. 115.001\(11\)](#). Registered nurses who hold less than a bachelor's degree in nursing must submit evidence of completion of a course in public health nursing or community health nursing as determined to be satisfactory by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) in order to use the title "school nurse" or be a "school nurse" as referenced in Wisconsin statutes.

A registered nurse with less than a bachelor's degree in nursing may submit a copy of their original transcript from an approved public/community health nursing course documenting a passing grade to the DPI state [school nurse consultant](#) along with their registered nurse license number and current employment information. In return, the registered nurse and their employer will receive a letter verifying the registered nurse has met the statutory definition of a "school nurse." This is a one-time requirement. The DPI maintains a list of preapproved public/community health nursing courses on this webpage: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/pupil-services/school-nurse/laws/public-health-courses>

School districts, CESAs, or county children with disabilities education board may employ registered nurses who are not school nurses to work in schools. Schools should use an alternative title for such nurses. Such registered nurses may practice to the full extent of their license as determined by the Wisconsin Nurse Practice

Act. However, some implications of a nurse working in schools who is not a school nurse are as follows:

- The school district, CESA, or county children with disabilities education board will not be eligible for special education categorical aid related to this position under [Wis. Stat. sec. 115.88](#).
- The school district must consult with a school nurse in developing and modifying medication administration policies under [Wis. Stat. sec. 118.29\(4\)](#).
- The nurse would not be eligible for the exemption from liability for a referral to police under [Wis. Stat. sec. 118.257](#).
- The nurse would not be included under [Wis. Stat. sec. 252.21](#) duties of schools for communicable disease management.

## Licensure

The Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services licenses registered and licensed practical nurses under [Wis. Stat. ch. 441](#). As discussed in the previous section, Wisconsin law defines a school nurse as a registered nurse licensed under [Wis. Stat. ch. 441](#) or who holds a multistate license, as defined in s. [441.51\(2\)\(h\)](#), issued in a party state, as defined in s. [441.51\(2\)\(k\)](#) who successfully completes a course in public health or community health. A Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) school nursing license is not required by state law. However, DPI licensure is available under Wis. Admin. Code secs. [PI 34.040\(2\)\(L\)](#), [PI 34.058](#) and [PI 34.060](#). School nurses licensed by the DPI are titled “Licensed School Nurses” and may use the credentials “LSN” to indicate this license and title.

There are two pathways to obtain a DPI school nursing license. 1) Following completion of an approved higher education program in school nursing and upon receiving the institutional endorsement, a school nurse can apply for a school nurse license by submitting an application form and fee to the DPI. 2) A school nurse may submit proof of national certification as a school nurse from the National Board for Certification of School Nurses, application form, and fee to the DPI.

Please see the [University of Wisconsin-Madison School Nurses Certification Program](#) for information regarding the 17-18 credit course leading to an institutional endorsement meeting requirements for DPI school nurse licensure. Information regarding national certification in school nursing can be found at the National Board for Certification of School Nurses website. <https://www.nbcsn.org/>.

# Certification

Certification in school nursing is not required. However, it does help ensure that the school nurse possesses the core knowledge for competent practice beyond licensure as a registered nurse.

The [National Board for Certification of School Nurses](#) is an independent organization which develops, administers, and evaluates a national certification examination for school nurses. Successful completion of the examination will result in the school nurse earning the credential of *Nationally Certified School Nurse*. Certification is then renewed every five years with successful completion of continuing education requirements or retests with a passing score. School nurses obtaining national certification are authorized to use the title “Nationally Certified School Nurse” and the credentials “NCSN.”