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Every School Needs a Full-Time Nurse, American Academy of Pediatrics Says

By [Evie Blad](#) on May 25, 2016 2:45 PM | [No comments](#)

Every school needs **at least one full-time nurse**, the American Academy of Pediatrics says in a new policy statement. But, in many cases, reality falls far short of that recommendation.

"School nursing is one of the most effective ways to keep children healthy and in school and to prevent chronic absenteeism," Breena Welch Holmes, a lead author of the position paper, said in a statement. "Pediatricians who work closely with school nurses will serve all of their patients better."

The new position is an update from a 2008 statement, when the organization supported ratios of 1 school nurse to 750 students in the healthy student population, and a 1 to 225 ratio for student populations with greater health care needs.

According to the National Association of School Nurses, just 45 percent of public schools have a school nurse all day, every day. Another 30 percent of schools have a school nurse who works part-time in one or more schools. "Wide ratio disparities exist from state to state, within states and school districts, and between urban and rural schools," the organization says.

As Denisa Superville and I wrote in 2014, "**nurses are often among the first to go** when districts face budget constraints because not every state requires a nurse to be in every school building."

From that story:

"The value of full-time, registered school nurses is not limited to the medical assistance they provide; there is also an economic benefit to society, according to a study published last month in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Researchers studied 78 Massachusetts districts that participated in the state's Essential School Health Services Program during the 2009-10 school year to demonstrate the benefits of having a full-time registered nurse on staff. The program cost \$79 million, but researchers estimated that it saved \$20 million in medical-care costs; \$28.1 million in parents' productivity loss; and \$129.1 million in teachers' productivity loss, generating a net benefit of \$98 million."

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