



National Association of School Nurses

POSITION STATEMENT

Role of the School Nurse in Violence Prevention

SUMMARY

It is the position of the National Association of School Nurses that school nurses have the skills to assist students to develop problem solving and conflict resolution techniques, coping and anger management skills, and a positive self-image, and to refer those students who require more in-depth counseling services when necessary. Furthermore, it is the position of the National Association of School Nurses that school nurses should be active members of crisis intervention teams and curriculum committees, and be involved in the development and planning of prevention and intervention programs within the school and community.

HISTORY

Today, homicide is the second leading cause of death overall for those 10-24 years and among African-Americans, homicide is the leading cause of death. In 2002, more than 877,700 young people were injured by violent acts (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2004). While students are more likely to be injured by violent crime away from school, 7-9% of students yearly report being threatened by a weapon on school property (DeVoe et al, 2004). Bullying, once considered a normal part of growing up, is now recognized as a precursor to extreme violence with mental health consequences for victim and perpetrator. The incidence of bullying in schools is increasing (CMHS, 2004). Also increasing is the incidence of serious fighting and group-against-group fighting (SAMHSA, 2004).

DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

Incidents of threats and acts of violence put communities at risk. Exposure to violence has significant emotional, behavioral and cognitive effects on children. Children who are exposed to violence are likely to exhibit fear, behavioral, cognitive and concentration problems and resultant difficulty achieving optimal academic success.

The risk factors for youth violence are a complex mix of individual, family, and environmental elements. At school, the risk for violence increases with:

- association with delinquent peers
- involvement in gangs
- social rejection by peers
- lack of involvement in conventional activities
- poor academic performance
- low commitment to school and school failure

Conversely, commitment to school and involvement in social activities decreases the risk for violence (DHHS, 2001). A positive school climate, a sense of belonging, and a bond with caring adults who hold high expectations protect against school violence (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002).

RATIONALE

Schools should be “safe zones” and adopt positions of no tolerance for weapons, crime and violence. Schools and communities must thoughtfully plan to proactively change behaviors in their quest to create a positive healthy, and safe environment. School nurses have the unique ability to address problems holistically, from physical, emotional, and social perspectives. School Nurses are prepared to deal with the physical and emotional results of violence, to contribute to positive youth development and academic success, and to collaborate with school and community for violence prevention and intervention.

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