

Dear families,

We are writing to share an update about school nurses and health services in the School District of Philadelphia school buildings. While your child's school is currently without a school nurse, it has always been the school district's goal to have a nurse in every school building -- a goal that exceeds the state requirements. In Philadelphia, across the region, and nationally there is a shortage of nurses that has resulted in numerous vacancies in nursing positions impacting our schools. We are urgently pursuing solutions.

Here is a summary of actions we have and are taking to help resolve these issues:

**Nursing recruitment and retention:**

We have:

- Reduced the burden on schools by implementing a centralized COVID Response Team who will conduct more of the follow up on positive COVID cases in schools.
- Contracted with numerous healthcare staffing agencies to assist with filling vacancies.
- Participated in ongoing conversations with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT) to find new ways to ensure effective recruitment and retention packages.
- Continuously filled vacancies in the order they become vacant and based on the medical needs of the students enrolled in the school.

**Process for managing health needs of students in schools without a school nurse:**

- Schools can not accept medications until a nurse is assigned
  - Exceptions to the policy are emergency medications below. In order for these medications to be administered a student must have a completed [Med-1 form](#) form on-file. The form must be signed by a physician.
    - EpiPen
    - Asthma Inhaler
    - Prolonged seizure nasal spray only
- Sick students in a school without a nurse:
  - All sick students (including fever, vomiting, and diarrhea) will be sent home immediately during the school day and can not return until they are well or have been evaluated by a doctor and are cleared to return to school.
  - COVID-related illness:
    - Students presenting with COVID like symptoms are sent home during the day by the school administration. Students have the option to be tested at one of the 5 [fixed sites](#) and can return to school if they have a negative test and are feeling well OR the student has been evaluated by their clinician and has been cleared to return to school.
- Medical Emergencies
  - School staff are not expected to treat medical emergencies. All school personnel have been instructed to call 911 in the case of any medical emergency.
  - Health and PE teachers are CPR and First Aid certified and can act as support when possible.
- Vaccination records
  - Vaccination records in a school without a nurse should be faxed to Student Health Services at (215) 400-4921 or emailed at [5VAX@philasd.org](mailto:5VAX@philasd.org).

We ask for your patience as we work through nurse vacancy issues. You can help by ensuring that your child's health record and emergency contact are up-to-date and accurate to help prioritize the needs of the school community.

We realize that this nurse shortage has very real consequences for our students, families and staff. Please know that we are taking this matter very seriously, and will continue to explore options until all vacancies are filled. If you know someone who may be interested in becoming a school nurse please visit <https://jobs.philasd.org/>.

If you have additional questions or concerns feel free to contact Student Health Services at [studenthealth@philasd.org](mailto:studenthealth@philasd.org).

Sincerely,

Student Health Services