

**Medical Cannabis in Schools -
Guidance Regarding School Nurses
In accordance with current law**

Background and Authority

Senate Bill 204, Medical Marijuana in Schools, and Senate Bill 406, Medical Marijuana Changes, became law on June 14, 2019 and amended the Public School Code by providing parameters for the possession, storage, and administration of medical cannabis to qualified students for use in school settings (§22-33-5 NMSA 1978).

While the New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) oversees the provision of health services in school settings by health service personnel, including school nurses (§24-1-4(B) NMSA 1978), the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) has received public comments regarding the forthcoming NMPED rule, including specific questions regarding the role of school nurses implementing in under current law. The NMPED is cognizant of federal law classifying cannabis as a Schedule 1 Controlled Substance and of medical cannabis not currently being approved as a medication by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). It is the understanding of the NMPED, that nurses, through the parameters of their state license, are unable to administer or delegate any cannabis containing products that are not FDA approved.

However, nurses should provide the same level of education, counseling support, and administrative guidance they would normally provide in situations where FDA-approved medications are administered in the school setting. In addition, due to the complexity of issues related to medical cannabis in our state, it is essential to recognize the role of the school nurse as a resource for students and for school community as a whole.

Ideally, the school nurse should understand the NMDOH Medical Cannabis Program. In addition, the school nurse should be proficient in assessing students for optimal effects, on the one hand, and adverse effects, on the other hand, of medical cannabis in the educational setting.

In general, the school nurse may educate others on safe medication administration practices for the care designee in the education setting and use school nursing knowledge to inform school board policy and procedures. Although medical cannabis (unless FDA approved) is not considered a medication, practical examples of the school nurse role would be advising on the safe and legal storage and disposal of cannabis, teaching the care designee principles of safe medication administration, and the verification and method of ingestion. Additionally, administration of medical cannabis should be thoroughly documented (schools may wish to develop a standardized documentation process for medical cannabis administration). Notwithstanding, the school nurse is to uphold ethical responsibilities and approach any student using medical cannabis without judgment for choice of treatment or preferences.

In conclusion, the school nurse should have the knowledge and expertise to be a leader of student health for students and the school community. The school nurse serves a critical role in the provision of competent assessment and evaluation, care planning, care coordination and management, and evidence-based direct care, except for direct administration and delegation of

administration of cannabis, within the governing laws and standards of care and practice. Now that Senate Bills 204 and 406 are law, the school nurse has a responsibility to assist the educational system in the development and administration of policy and procedure and to assist in the safe execution of the New Mexico statute and rule related to medical cannabis in the school setting. Further information may be found at the NMPED's Safe and Healthy Schools Bureau website: <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/safe-healthy-schools/>