

School Nurses supporting local boards of health with COVID-19 contact tracing and surveillance

Position Brief

Purpose

The Massachusetts School Nurse Organization (MSNO) appreciates MA legislators recognizing the role of School Nurses in assisting local boards of health during the COVID-19 pandemic. MSNO seeks to respond to the following language in a letter, dated April 3, 2020, from legislators sent to Governor Baker, *“We ask you to use your emergency authority to expedite and/or waive credentialing requirements to allow school nurses to help treat COVID-19 patients, as well as to allow school nurses to assist local community health boards with contact tracing efforts.”*

Summary

It is the position of MSNO that MA Registered Nurses working in school settings (MA School Nurses) are experienced in population-based health, including illness surveillance.¹ MSNO supports and encourages MA School Nurses, as current responsibilities allow, to voluntarily assist their local health departments during the COVID-19 pandemic while schools are involved in remote learning. MSNO urges local boards of health to engage with MA School Nurses who are interested in volunteering to assist with COVID-19 tracing and surveillance.

Rationale

- "MAVEN" is the Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiologic Network - a PHIN (Public Health Information Network) compliant, secure web-based surveillance and case management system for infectious diseases that enables rapid, efficient communication among local and state health departments and laboratories.²
- Local health departments authorize training in MAVEN for public health nurses and others as deemed appropriate by the local board of health director.
- Some MA School Nurses have been trained in MAVEN and are performing contact tracing and surveillance to assist local boards of health in municipalities where they work. Others are willing to assist but need to be authorized for training by their local boards of health.
- MA School Nurses' credentials, Registered Nurses (MA Board of Registered Nursing) and Educators in Public Schools (MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education), do not need to be expedited or waived to participate in MAVEN training or contact tracing and surveillance.
- School Nurses partner with parents/guardians and health care providers to help manage chronic health conditions of individuals who are called students, not patients.
- While remote learning is going on, MA School Nurses have continued responsibilities to support students, families and school staff, and may have limited time to assist local boards of health.

For more information, please contact Jenny Gormley, DNP, RN, NCSN at president@msno.org.

¹National Association of School Nurses
<https://www.nasn.org/advocacy/professional-practice-documents/position-statements/ps-role>

²About MAVEN (http://www.maventrainingsite.com/mavenhelp/Training_Tool_Draft/Training_Tool_Draft_print.html)