



# Collaboration Between Public Health Nurses and School Nurses

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# Purpose and Learning Outcomes



Explain the two complementary roles of public health nurses and school nurses.

Identify key three benefits of collaboration between PHNs and school nurses.

Analyze three barriers to effective collaboration.

# Definition of school nurse

A **school nurse** is a specialized practitioner of nursing who works primarily in K-12 schools, though sometimes in preschools or colleges, to ensure students remain healthy, safe, and ready to learn (National Association of School Nurses, 2022).

School nursing is founded in public health nursing (NASN, 2021)



Images from the History of Medicine (IHM)

# Historical Perspective

- First nurses were from public health
- 1940s-1950s education became primary funder



[School Nursing Celebrates 120th Anniversary - Henry Street Settlement](#)

# Today

- In the US, school nurses can be employed by local health departments.

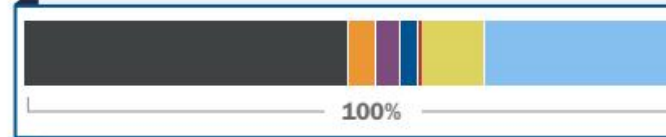
Or

- Partially funded by health department funds.

(Willgerodt et al., 2024)



## Sources of Funding for Public School Nurses:



■ Department of Education Only: **41.9%**

■ Health Department Only: **5.3%**

■ Grants Only: **3.5%**

■ Special Education funds only: **2.8%**

■ Medicaid Only: **0.2%**

■ Other: **14.8%**

■ Multiple Sources: **31.4%**

[NOTE: numbers below show percentages of various entities within multiple sources]

Department of Education: **63.6%**

Medicaid: **11.5%**

Special education funds: **13.9%**

Health Department: **11.5%**

Grants: **18.5%**

Other: **30.7%**

Funding for school nurses is often blended through several sources. Respondents were allowed to select multiple responses; therefore, summed percentages are greater than 100%.

A decorative background featuring a stylized, overlapping pattern of leaves in shades of orange and yellow, set against a solid orange background. The leaves are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, with some leaves appearing to be in the foreground and others receding into the background.

# Roles and Value of Collaboration

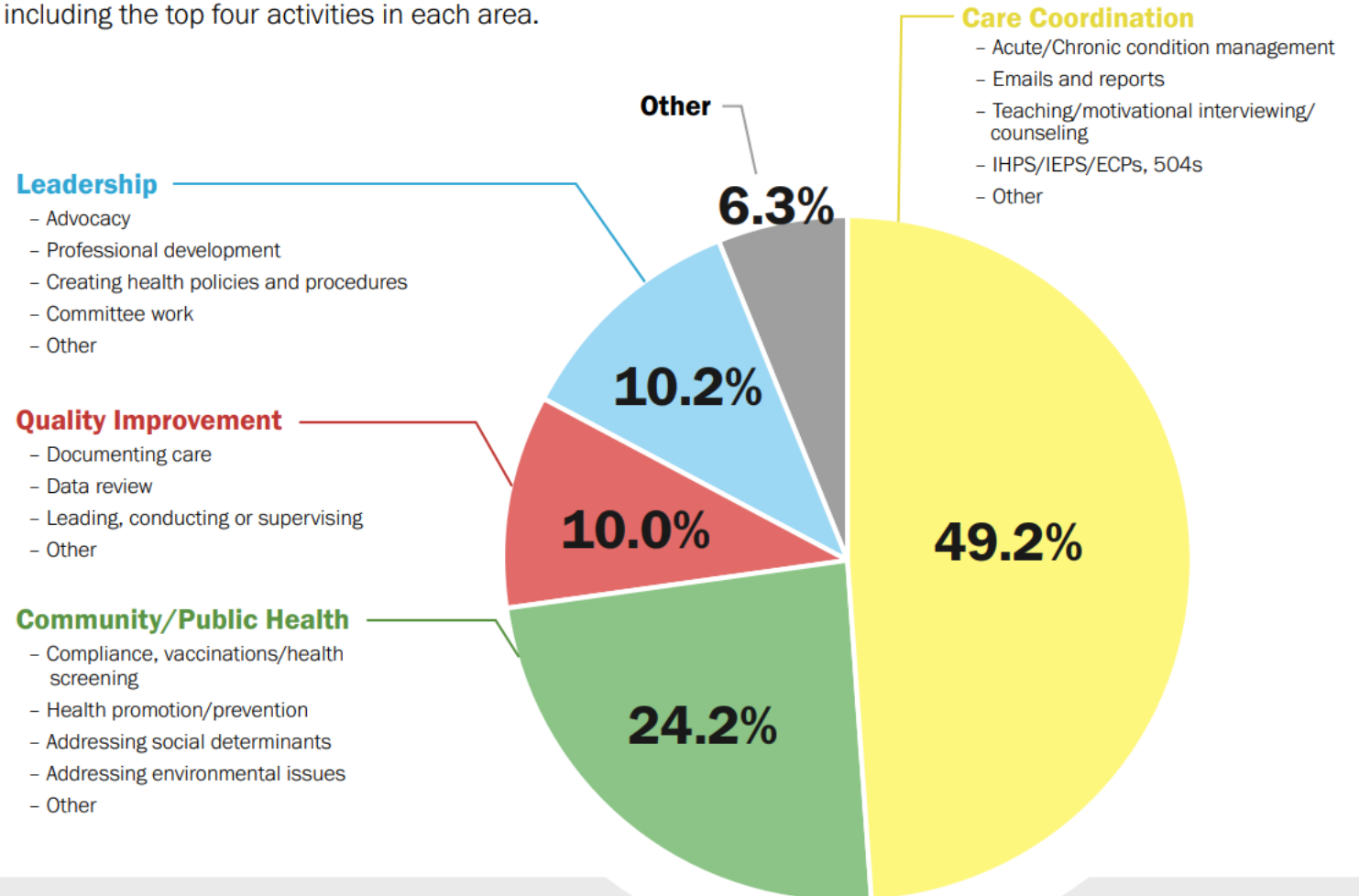
# Role of School Nurse

## School Nurses' Role

Provide direct care to students, manage chronic conditions, conduct health screenings, and address social determinants of health.

(Willgerodt et al., 2024)

Below is a breakdown of how school nurses (RN) spend their time, including the top four activities in each area.



# Roles of Public Health Nurses



Images from the History of Medicine (IHM)

## Public Health Nurses' Role

Focus on **population health**, community assessments, disease surveillance, emergency preparedness, and advocacy for vulnerable groups.



# Where is the Overlap? Complimentary Role



Images from the History of Medicine (IHM)

## Health Screenings

Collaboration enhances early identification of health issues.

## Disease Surveillance

Tracking, early identification, contact tracing.

## Enhanced Health Education

Joint efforts ensure culturally responsive, age-appropriate health education aligned with public health priorities across schools and communities.

## Population-based Interventions

Collaboration increases reach and sustainability of interventions like immunization clinics and mental health initiatives in schools.

## Social Factors & Inequities

Helping those in vulnerable situations..





# Barriers and Strategies for Strengthening Partnerships

# Barriers to Effective PHN and School Nurse Collaboration



## Disconnected Planning and Governance

Independent strategic planning causes duplication, missed synergies, and ineffective interventions.



## Fragmented Information Systems

Non-interoperable health and school data prevent timely sharing and coordinated decision-making.



## Siloed Funding Streams

Separate funding with distinct requirements hinders joint initiatives and fosters resource competition.

# Strategies to Strengthen Collaboration Through Integrated Systems

## **Coordinated Planning and Governance**

Engage in joint planning, community health assessments, and formal partnerships to align priorities and clarify roles.

## **Sustained Leadership and Policy Support**

Ensure leadership commitment and policy alignment to maintain integrated efforts for long-term health improvements.

## **Interoperable Information Systems**

Implement secure data sharing systems with shared dashboards and standardized data to enhance coordination and care evaluation.

## **Integrated Funding Models**

Develop funding models that support joint initiatives to reduce competition and promote collaboration between health and education sectors.

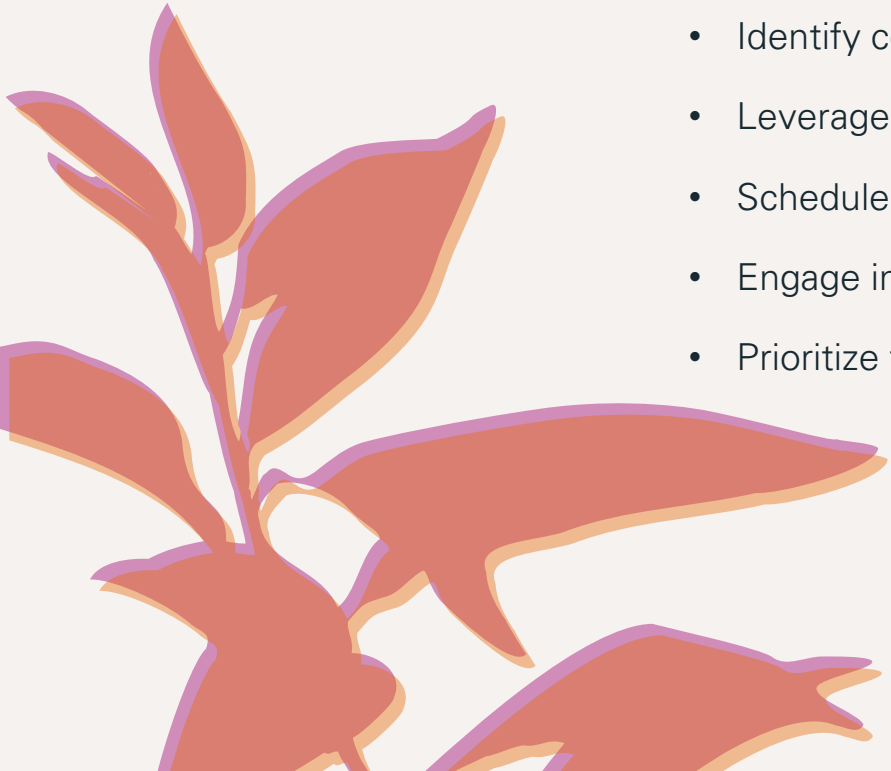


# Where to begin?

- Build relationships of trust
  - Committee work
  - Proactive sharing
  - Open communication
- Change perspective
- Identify common goals
- Leverage strengths
- Schedule regular check ins
- Engage in thought leadership
- Prioritize trust



Images from the History of Medicine (IHM)



"When 'I' is replaced by  
'we', even 'illness'  
becomes 'wellness'."

(unknown)



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