POSITION STATEMENT ON SPECIALIZED HEALTH CARE PROCEDURES

DPHD Critical Issues and Leadership Committee

An increasing number of students require specialized health care procedures during school hours. Procedures such as tube feeding, clean intermittent catheterization, suctioning, and ventilator management are becoming more common place in the school setting. Who actually performs the procedures and is responsible for them being correctly implemented varies across school districts and states. Although consensus can be difficult to reach regarding who should be performing these procedures at school, consensus can be reached regarding other critical areas surrounding specialized health care procedures. Two critical areas have been identified by the Critical Issues and Leadership Committee of the Division for Physical and Health Disabilities. These are as follows:

First and foremost, all teachers need to maintain a safe, healthy environment for their students in collaboration with others in the school. This includes learning about their students’ specific physical and/or health impairments, physical health care procedures, and treatment regimen. Teachers should know the major problems and emergencies that could arise with each student. There should be a plan in place to know how to respond should a problem occur. Teachers should also know general safety skills such as universal precautions, general first aid, and CPR to promote a safe, healthy environment.

Second, specialized health care procedures should be viewed as self-help skills or independent living skills which students should be taught to promote their independence. Specialized health care procedures and other health management skills should be considered for IEP goals and objectives. These IEP objectives could target independent performance, partial participation, directing someone else in performance, or knowledge of the task. It is the educational team’s responsibility to consider how students can participate in their own self-care. When the team decides to target this area of instruction, teachers of students with physical and health disabilities are responsible for designing and implementing curriculum and instructional strategies for medical self-management procedures by students with specialized health care needs (The Council for Exceptional Children, 1998). The plan for, and establishment of, instruction in the area of medical self management skill development must include input from appropriate health care specialists (such as nurses, OTs & PTs). Teachers of students with physical and health disabilities are responsible for providing expertise in the area of instructional strategies and adaptations to promote student learning of these procedures. Even when health care personnel are responsible for performing these procedures, teachers must work closely with them, providing appropriate instructional strategies, error analysis, and correction procedures.
In summary, teachers have a responsibility to develop knowledge and skills regarding their students’ health care needs. Maintaining a safe, healthy environment and viewing their students’ specialized health care needs as potential educational targets requiring the teacher’s expertise in instruction, are two issues that require more attention and commitment.

REFERENCE