



# CDC Healthy Schools Stories of Achievement

Healthy Students, Ready to Learn

## ARIZONA

Providing Arizona *school nurses* and health staff with the *information* and *support* they need.

**More than half** of the *children* in Arizona are **considered low-income**, according to the National Center for Children in Poverty. *School nurses* can **provide health services** to these children when a trip to the doctor is not a financial option.

Although both the American Academy of Pediatrics and National Association of School Nurses recommend having at least one registered nurse in every school, Arizona law does not require it. As a result, health assistants, certified nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses, and other school staff often double as school health staff. The health background of these staff members varies, which results in inconsistent care for K–12 students across the state.

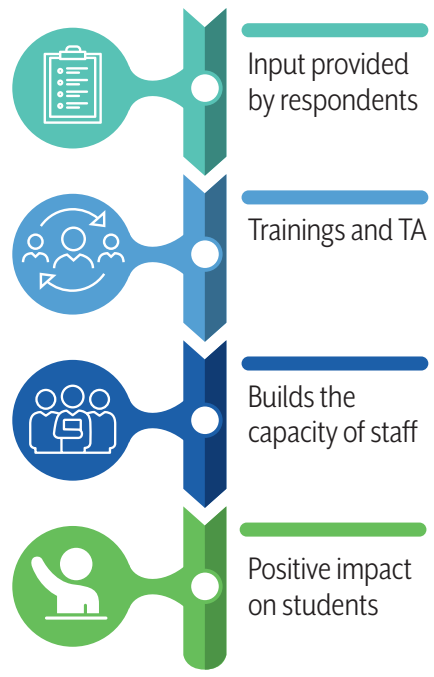
In April and May 2021, the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) partnered with the School Nurse Organization of Arizona to survey school nurses and other health staff. The survey was conducted to determine the number of school nurses employed in the state, the problems they encounter day-to-day, and how ADE can help, such as by offering professional development or regular engagement opportunities. A total of 390 surveys were completed.

### Impact

ADE launched the following initiatives as a result of the survey findings:

- **School Nurse (SN) HUDDLES** – These virtual networking opportunities hosted on the third Wednesday of every month allowed school nurses and health staff to share ideas, address challenges, gather updates, and get support from the Arizona 1801 Grant Team. The first huddle was held in September 2021, with 45 attendees. Two more huddles followed, with

**390 school nurses and health staff members completed surveys informing training and technical assistance needs to better address student health and wellness.**



increasing participation. Some of the challenges identified include:

- Feeling overwhelmed with additional duties because of COVID-19.
  - Problems getting parents to comply with COVID-19 protocols set by the schools and school districts (such as wearing masks or picking up their kids with symptoms).
  - Trying to address parents' concerns with vaccines based on myths or misinformation.
  - Addressing community members' concerns when vaccine clinics take place in schools.
- **Quarterly Virtual Professional Development Series** – This virtual opportunity for school nurse and health staff across the state was launched in November 2021. The first webinar addressed the most time-consuming and challenging chronic health condition revealed by the survey: mental health. Future topics will reflect other needs that were identified in the survey findings.
  - **School Nursing and Health Services web page** – Survey respondents wanted to receive better communication and guidance on school nursing and health services from ADE. The web page supports both new and veteran school nurses and other health office staff members in Arizona.
  - **Nurses' Notes** – This monthly school nurse newsletter provides school nurse and health staff with a consistent form of communication from ADE to help support them in their practice.

## What's Next?

SN HUDDLES and Nurses' Notes will continue monthly. ADE is also creating school nurse committees to address the key issues that have been raised in SN HUDDLES, such as a Seizure Action Plan Committee, District Lead Nurse Committee, Professional Development Committee, and Data Committee. ADE will continue to survey school nurses and other health staff members annually to evaluate its efforts.



School nurses play an important role in helping students manage their chronic health conditions, connecting families with outside health resources, and maintaining the safety and health of students and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.