Drug Endangered Students and the School Nurse’s Role

Virginia Association of School Nurses, Inc.
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Impact of Substance Abuse

- Substance use and abuse impacts children from preschool to high school
- Living in a home affected by drug &/or alcohol abuse adversely impacts students
- Personal use & abuse result in legal, physical and social consequences
Impact by the Numbers

• 27.2% of students nationwide had been offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property in last 12 months (CDC, 2010)

• 36.8% of students nationwide had used marijuana at least once (CDC, 2010)

• 4.6% had used marijuana on school property more than once during last 30 days

• Abuse of prescription drugs accounts for 8% of illegal drug use among adolescents (National Institute of Drug Abuse, 2010)
How It Presents at School

- Increase in behavioral problems
- Drop in academic performance
- Reduced attendance
- Evidence of neglect, abuse
- Increase in health-related concerns
Prevention & Intervention

The Professional School Nurse (RN):

• Provides health counseling and education to individual students, classroom group, faculty and parents/guardians
• Communicates knowledge and skills in decision making, personal values identification, problem-solving, communication which strengthen self-esteem and coping
• Uses proven interactive approaches to enhance protective factors and reduce risk factors
• Is trusted, approachable, and educated health care professional
Prevention & Intervention

- Makes appropriate referrals to agencies like social services, drug/alcohol treatment services, behavioral health services and child protection teams
- Respects confidentiality of student
- Problem solves ethical dilemmas often associated with substance abuse and use issues
- Assesses, supports, and participates in community prevention efforts surrounding substance abuse
- Identifies and supports students impacted by substance abuse and/or recreational use
Drug Testing

• The AAP (2007) states that the primary care physician should be the first contact by parents suspecting adolescent drug abuse.

• The Association of Addiction Professionals (2010) views the health care setting as the appropriate venue for drug testing.

• When positive drug tests occur, the School Nurse assists students and parents via referral to primary care health providers and addiction professionals.
Free Educational Resources

1. VASN’s Community Resources Page
   http://www.vasn.us/

2. National Association of School Nurses
   http://www.nasn.org/ToolsResources/DrugsofAbuse
   – Unintended Consequences: Prescription Drug Abuse in Our Schools and Communities (free)
   – The Current State of Teenage Drug Abuse: Trend Toward Prescription Drugs
   – Home to Homeroom
   – Smart Moves, Smart Choices
   – Help Families Fight the Abuse of Rx and OTC Drugs
3. National Library of Medicine
   http://druginfo.nlm.nih.gov/drugportal

4. McNeil OTC Literacy/Scholastic
   http://www.scholastic.com/OTCliteracy
What You Can Do

• Talk to your Professional School Nurse
  – Is your School Nurse a Registered Nurse in Virginia?
  – What is the School Nurse’s educational background?
  – Is the School Nurse employed to serve in the school building all day every day?
  – Who provides student health care in the absence of the School Nurse?
  – Find out how you can collaborate with the School Nurse.

• If your school does not employ a Registered Nurse, then ask who coordinates and provides student health services and referrals
References
