



Community Health Nurses working in secondary schools

WHO ARE THE COMMUNITY HEALTH NURSES?

School Health Services are delivered in all public secondary schools and colleges across Western Australia by Community Health Nurses, who are employed by WA Country Health Services or Child and Adolescent Health Service (in metropolitan Perth). Community Health Nurses working with secondary schools are usually based at one school, but may also provide services at other schools.

WHO ARE THEIR CLIENTS?

Community Health Nurses are well skilled in assessing adolescent health needs, and engage in health counselling with young people to identify issues, risks and protective factors; provide advice; provide brief intervention; assist with access and referral to other services, and provide follow up care.

A recent survey of Community Health Nurses in WA secondary schools indicated that students present with a wide range of health issues. The ten most common issues are; anxiety, stress, depression or low mood, relationship problems, sexual health, sexuality, reproductive health, nutrition, lifestyle or health behaviours, and drug misuse. It is also common for Community Health Nurses to encounter young people who self-harm, who have considered or attempted suicide, and those seeking help for sexual assault and/or domestic violence.

The school health centre is a place where adolescents can drop in or make appointments to discuss health and wellbeing issues. Young people may independently seek assistance from a Community Health Nurse, but can be referred by parents, teachers or student services teams.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH SERVICES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS?

- Access to health services for students, to address a range of health issues as mentioned above;
- Support for teachers to provide health education in the classroom, eg. sexual health;
- Facilitation of (health-related) professional development for teachers, e.g. asthma or anaphylaxis;
- Student health and wellbeing programs, e.g. stress management, sexual health and relationships;
- Support for school health promotion initiatives such as anti-smoking or mental health programs;
- Assistance for school staff and parents to develop health care plans for students with special needs (eg chronic disease; physical disability or other complex health conditions);
- Assistance for school to establish systems to deal with injury and illness in the school community;
- First aid for medical emergencies, if available. (Schools must have first aid plans which are independent of the Community Health Nurse, as they are often not on site.)

As a *general rule* Community Health Nurses;

- Do not provide first aid. (The school is responsible for this.)
- Do assist with serious injury or illness, eg. anaphylaxis, altered consciousness or trauma;
- Do not administer medication;
- Do not conduct invasive physical examinations;
- Do not conduct checks for head lice; or,
- Do not undertake long term counselling about psychological or educational problems.

