

Pilot Assessment of Barriers to Asthma Care in the Elementary School Setting: A Sustainable DNP Project Exemplar

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BACKGROUND

- Access to asthma interventions in the school setting may be impacted by limited school nurse services, the process for identifying children with asthma, parents' inability to satisfy school forms requirements, and laws designed to protect the privacy of student records (US Dept of Ed., 2014) and health information (United States, 2004).
- Exploring opportunities for multi-phase doctor of nursing practice (DNP) projects, such as with schools, may highlight opportunities for sustainable projects and ongoing, mutually beneficial collaborations.

PURPOSE

- Describe an assessment of the process, policies, and procedures that impact access to asthma interventions in an elementary school as part of a DNP student project.
- Analyze next steps for ongoing DNP nurse-led quality improvement initiatives that seek to increase access to asthma interventions in the school setting.

METHODS

The project was implemented in a large urban elementary school serving 433 pre-k through fourth grade students with a nurse on site approximately once per month. An audit was conducted by the DNP student to determine:

1. total number of health history forms returned to the school,
2. total number of health history forms indicating a diagnosis of asthma,
3. number of children with a school asthma management plan, and
4. number of children with access to asthma medication (form and albuterol inhaler) at school.

RESULTS

- 18.7% (n=81) of students in this school had been identified by a parent or had self-identified as having a diagnosis of asthma;
- 28% (n=23) had the diagnosis confirmed by a healthcare provider and an asthma action plan in place; and 8.6% (n=7) had required forms for medication self-administration and quick relief inhaler at school.
- Of the 23 students whose diagnoses were confirmed by a healthcare provider, all 23 had an asthma management plan in place.
- 30% of those students with a confirmed diagnosis (n=7) had a quick relief (albuterol) inhaler at school by the end of the school year.

CONCLUSIONS

Doctor of nursing practice students are well positioned to initiate strategic and sustainable quality improvement initiatives. Sustained engagement may promote changes in practice that improve access to asthma care and interventions in this pilot school through recommendations to promote identification of children with asthma, ensure required medication forms reach the school, HIPAA release forms are signed to allow communication between schools and healthcare providers, and submit prescription authorizations for an extra inhaler for school.

