

Welcome back to all school students for 2016 and a warm welcome to the Kindergarten students embarking on their school journey.

I will be the School Health Nurse for schools in Tom Price and supporting Paraburdoo this year. I commenced this position last year at the start of Term 2 after accepting the secondment that has followed onto a permanent appointment.

As a nurse, I have clocked up my experience within Australia and Overseas with years of emergency and oncology nursing experience. For the past 11 years I have worked at the Tom Price Hospital and now moved into this position within Population Health. I have continued with professional and personal education and I am starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel as I work towards the completion of my dual Master's Degree in Public Health and Child and Adolescent Mental Health.

The Child and Adolescent Health Service as part of the Government of Western Australia has outlined the School Health Nurse Role as follows:



### **WHO ARE THE SCHOOL HEALTH NURSES?**

School Health Services are delivered in all public and private primary schools and district high schools across Western Australia. The School Health Nurses who deliver the services, are employed by WA Country Health Services or Child and Adolescent Health Service (in metropolitan Perth). Teams of Community Health Nurses are based in over 30 sites across the State, from which they travel to provide services in local primary schools and high schools.

### **WHO ARE THEIR CLIENTS?**

Community Health Nurses working in primary schools provide services to children, especially to young children and their families. They collaborate extensively with teaching and other school staff.

### **WHAT ARE THE HEALTH SERVICES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS?**

School Health Nurses are primarily involved in early detection and health education. They build capacity within the schools to care for children with particular health needs, (i.e. anaphylaxis, asthma), and often assist classroom teachers with delivery of the health education curriculum, especially in the area of puberty, growth and development. A School Level Agreement is negotiated between the School Health Nurse and the Principal to guide service delivery at individual schools.

School Health Nurses work in schools to promote healthy development and wellbeing so students may reach their full potential. A major part of their work is focussed on early intervention and the School Entry Health Assessment program. School Health Nurses serve as a health contact point for children, and their families, providing information, assessment, health counselling and referral.

### **They may provide;**

- Information, advocacy and support for children and their parents to make informed decisions about health, wellbeing and development.
- Health and development assessments.

- Referral to other health services for further assessment, tests, diagnosis, treatment or therapy.
- Parenting advice and parenting programs (i.e. Triple P).
- Support for teachers to provide health education in the classroom.
- Student health and wellbeing programs, e.g. protective behaviours.
- Support for school health promotion initiatives.
- Facilitation of professional development for teachers, e.g. asthma or anaphylaxis

Help to school staff and parents to develop health care plans for students with special needs (eg chronic disease; physical disability or other complex health conditions)

**As a general rule Community Health Nurses;**

- Do not provide minor first aid. (The school is responsible for this).
- Do not administer medication.
- Do not conduct invasive physical examinations.
- Do not conduct checks for head lice.
- Do not undertake long term counselling about psychological, relationship or educational problems.

**SCHOOL ENTRY HEALTH ASSESSMENTS**

School Health Nurses endeavour to conduct a **School Entry Health Assessment (SEHA)** for every child during the first year of school – usually Kindergarten. This universal screening program aims to detect problems with hearing, vision and development, and any other health and wellbeing issues which are of concern for parents. These assessments are usually conducted with parent present.

A parent questionnaire (CHS 409) is sent via the school to inform parents about the SEHA and seek their consent. The questionnaire facilitates collection of relevant health history and gives parents an opportunity to identify concerns. This questionnaire will be coming home in the second week of term 1.

Screening tests are not comprehensive assessments, but highlight issues which may need further assessments and/ or treatment. The tests are non-invasive and quickly applied.

- Vision screening includes; LEA symbols chart (distance vision), cover and corneal light reflex tests (eye health and development). Rechecks are conducted if required.
- Hearing and ear health screening involves non-invasive tests, including; audiometry (listening to sounds) and otoscopy (check of ear drum and canal). Rechecks are conducted if required.
- Developmental screening includes a 'first level screen' using a parent evaluation tool (included in the CHS 409), and teacher observations. If there may be a problem, the Community Health Nurse will assess the child against expected development milestones.
- If indicated, other tests and observations are conducted for specific issues, eg. weight / height, dental health or behaviour problems. Nurses communicate and work with parents to provide information and support and link them to other health providers, as required.
- School Health Nurses refer clients to a range of providers for further assessment and treatment, most commonly to general practitioners and child development services. Referrals can be done collaboratively with the classroom teacher.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any concerns or questions. I am more than happy to take any calls and look forward to supporting your child's health and well-being needs whilst at school.