

School nurses are the GATE KEEPERS for students with concussion. School nurses are the first responders when students are injured at school, and the first to typically identify undiagnosed concussions by spotting the RED FLAGS.

Red Flags

A student who visits the nurse's office for several consecutive days, always after Spanish Class at 1pm with a severe headache would not signify "possibly concussion" to the everyday person, but to school nurses, this is a **concussion red flag!**

School Nurses are the KEY medical educational professional to help guide concussion teams at school. Every concussion team should include the school nurse.

The school nurse can provide ongoing monitoring of post-concussion symptoms and act as a liaison with stakeholders. For students who have persistent symptoms, the school nurse can work with the provider and family to facilitate a Section 504 Plan and/or a referral for special education evaluation as needed.

~ National Association of School Nurses position statement on concussions (2012)

With 80 to 90% of students recovering from a concussion in 3 to 4 weeks, it would be a small minority needing a Section 504 Plan, and an even smaller minority needing to go on to an IEP; a school nurse is helpful in navigating these options.

Where the HIPAA Privacy Rule applies, does it allow a health care provider to disclose protected health information (PHI) about a student to a School Nurse or Physician?

The **HIPAA Privacy Rule allows** covered health care providers to disclose PHI about students **to school nurses, physicians, or other health care providers for treatment purposes, without the authorization of the student or student's parent.**

For example, a student's primary care physician may discuss the student's medication and other health care needs with a school nurse who will administer the student's medication and provide care to the student while the student is at school.

HIPAA allows for communication regarding treatment between health care providers. Nurses are listed in the definition of a health care provider. Several years ago, the US Departments of Education & Health & Human Services published a joint guidance document on HIPAA & FERPA.

The official title is,

“Joint Guidance on the Application of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) And the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) to Student Health Records”

and can be found online at
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpc/o/doc/ferpa-hipaa-guidance.pdf>