



Division of Student Equity & Opportunity Department of Nursing Services Dr. Miranda Kogon, M.S. Kathrine Hale, M.Ed, BSN, RN, NCSN Manager of Nursing and Student Health Services

Re: Student Substance Intoxication, Revised
Date: 03/17/2021

Recently questions have been raised about strategies to support students who appear to be intoxicated while at school. Some suggestions for school personnel are provided below:

1. Utilize your school's code of conduct and the District's discipline policy to help guide your thinking regarding students who may behave in a disruptive fashion regardless of whether or not the disruptive behavior is due to potential substance use intoxication or due to other environmental factors. Policy and Procedure JICH/JICH-R address steps to take if you suspect a student is intoxicated or under the influence of a controlled substance.
2. All staff should:
 - Consider underlying health problems that could mimic intoxication (i.e., diabetes, epilepsy, or other).
 - Document the student's overall observation including:
 - Odor (i.e., tobacco smoke, sweet, acetone, or other)
 - Speech (i.e., slurred, normal, etc.)
 - Energy level (i.e., wide awake, asleep, groggy, etc.)
 - Appearance (i.e., disheveled, neatly dressed, burn marks on hands, etc.)
 - Ability to recall event/injuries incurred
 - Type/amount of substance involved
 - Time/amount of substance exposure (i.e., oral, inhalation, injection, etc.)

If the assigned school nurse is available, they should complete and document a physical assessment that includes the:

- Level of consciousness and orientation
- Vital Signs

- Respiratory effort (rapid, slow, or normal)
- Pupils
- Skin (i.e., diaphoretic, dry, flushed, cool, warm, hot, etc.)
- Gait

Based on the outcome of the school nurse's assessment the nurse will determine if the situation is non-urgent, urgent, or emergent. The disposition will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

In all cases, parents and school leaders will be notified. In a non-urgent case, the student will remain with the school nurse until parents retrieve the student or it is determined the student is safe to return to class. In urgent and emergent cases, 911 will be called.

If the assigned school nurse is not in the building and staff are concerned about the student's safety, they should call 911.

3. Based on the nurse's assessment, if the student appears to be under the influence of alcohol, narcotics, or other dangerous substances, the school nurse should follow procedures outlined by the Department of Nursing and Student Health Services and in Procedure JICH-R.
4. Utilize in-house mental/physical health resources to determine the frequency/duration of the behavior, and develop a check-in list of students, or create a group for students who have drug/alcohol challenges to assist them in developing other coping strategies
5. If your school has a partnership with a School-Based Health Clinic (SBHC), strongly consider developing a relationship with your SBHC to proactively address the needs of students who are intoxicated. Strategies can include providing groups/workshops for students at risk for substance abuse, providing parent/community discussions on student substance use/intoxication, teacher trainings on supporting students who are abusing substances, etc.

In conclusion, **please bear in mind that the DPS discipline Ladder/Matrix does not mandate in-school/out-of-school suspension upon a student being at school that appears to be intoxicated or smelling of illegal drugs.**