

I. INTRODUCTION

As stated by the American Academy of Pediatrics' Committee on School Health: "Ideally, all medication should be given at home. If medications are to be given during school hours, the school board should provide a clearly defined policy in this area. It is recognized that at the present time many children are able to attend regular school because of the effectiveness of medications in the treatment of chronic disabilities and illness" (Pediatrics 61:115-116, 1978).

II. OPTIONS FOR TAKING MEDICATIONS AT SCHOOL**A. Self-Administration**

Older students may be allowed to assume responsibility for administration of their own medications, provided that self-administration is recommended, in writing, by the prescribing physician and the parent/guardian. The child must be instructed by the parent or physician on how to take his/her medication.

The parent/guardian must communicate with the school nurse. It is recommended that only one day's supply of medication be taken by the child to school each day.

B. Administration by the Nurse

In some cases, a school child will be considered either too young or otherwise incapable of reliably taking his/her own medication. In this situation, an arrangement should be worked out with the school nurse so that the nurse may administer the medication to the child. Clear and explicit written communication among physician, parent, and school nurse is essential in such cases.

The container with the medication must be labeled with the name of the drug, the strength and correct dosage schedule for administration, the name of the student, and the name of the physician. Medications must be kept in a central location within a locked closet or cabinet. The young child and the handicapped retarded child should be taught, according to level of ability, why he/she takes the medicine and according to what schedule it should be given.

C. Supervised Self-Administration

In some cases, a school nurse is not available to administer a medication to a child who is either too young or is otherwise incapable of reliably taking his/her medication. In these special cases, the following approach is acceptable if the child in fact required the medication in order to remain in school and must take the medication during school hours. The parent must give the child's teacher or other authorized person a prescription container labeled with the child's name, the name of the medication, and the date and time to be taken. The teacher or other authorized person will give the container to the child and instruct him/her to take the medication at the specified time. Over-the-counter medications must be accompanied with a note from the parent/guardian stating the time medication needs to be given.

III. SELECTION OF OPTIONS

It is to be recognized that options one and two are to be preferred, option three being reserved for situations where no alternative exists. A combination of options two and three may be appropriate when a school nurse is present on some, but not all, days. In all options, it is essential that the school nurse be notified of all students taking medications at school.