

New CPS Nursing Contract To Improve Efficiency in Services and Better Meet Student Needs

Contract Part of Strategy to Deliver a Demand-Driven and Cost-Effective Nursing Model to All Schools

CHICAGO – The Chicago Board of Education today approved a new contract to improve the quality of nursing across Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and enhance working conditions for school nurses at no additional cost. A four-year, \$30 million contract will now manage all hiring, staffing and training of nurses under one roof for the first time. The new contract, effective immediately, will supplement the existing nursing model and will allow the District to address a shortage of nurses and better focus on the needs of the whole student body.

“At Chicago Public Schools, we know that a student’s health is directly linked to academic achievement, and our nursing model is designed to provide the highest quality of care to our students,” said Interim CPS CEO Jesse Ruiz. “This new contract will allow us to maintain a highly-qualified nursing pipeline and improve the current operational model to more efficiently meet the needs of every student in every school.”

CPS employs nearly 300 full-time nurses and guarantees a designated certified school nurse (CSN) to every school. However, due to a national shortage of CSNs, there are vacancies that exist, which is why this nursing contract is necessary. In addition to filling those vacancies, the new contract will enable the District to build a more cost-effective and demand-driven model to meet the needs of all students. The new contract will not change the way that CPS has staffed nurses, and will instead strengthen the existing pipeline of qualified nurses and enable the District to fill short term needs where they arise.

By using a more effective scheduling system, which will also reduce the number of agency nurses needed and improve working conditions for school staff nurses, the District anticipates an estimated \$1 million in savings from the new streamlined processes in the first year.

CPS brought forth a recommendation for RCM Health Care Services after launching an RFP in November 2014, as the current agreement ends this year. CPS selected RCM, among 11 applicants, based upon its ability to address three key issues: efficient scheduling of nurses, professional development opportunities, and staffing vacancies.

Through its proposal, RCM Health Care Services demonstrated extensive experience providing nursing services to students with special needs by tying school nursing services to academic achievement. For more than 25 years, RCM has specialized in school services, and works with school districts in Hawaii, New York City and Philadelphia. By working with school staff and families, the agency has delivered positive student outcomes through individualized nursing care.

CPS will implement a new state of the art management system that encompasses staffing, credentialing, and scheduling. CPS nurses will also have access to a wide variety of competency-based education training, ensuring that they keep current in industry best practices and are consistently providing a high standard of care.

The new contract is part of a larger effort by the District to build efficiencies while cutting costs. Over the past four years, CPS has made efficiency upgrades to the tune of \$740 million in administrative, operations and central office savings. In addition to building an enhanced pipeline of qualified nurses, the four-year contract will provide CPS with future savings based on improved processes, while upholding a high standard of student care.

Chicago Public Schools serves 396,000 students in 664 schools. It is the nation’s third-largest school district.