



Avera eCARE® School Health Keeps Students Healthy & Ready to Learn

A student's ability to learn is directly related to his or her health. When students have access to the health care they need throughout the school day, it not only improves their health, but is an investment in their education and future.

Giving students a better opportunity to thrive is the heart behind Avera eCARE School Health.

Connecting Students with Registered Nurses via Telemedicine

The reality of stretched school budgets and increasing student health needs makes providing students with timely health care a challenge. Avera eCARE rose to the challenge by developing a time-efficient and cost-effective program that connects schools with a registered nurse via telemedicine – eCARE School Health.

At any time during the school day, a school staff member who is designated and trained as the on-site unlicensed assistive personnel (UAP) can request a consultation for chronic or urgent health care needs due to injury or illness. Within minutes, a registered nurse is available via video to assess the situation and advise the staff member on how to help the student.

In addition to consultations, eCARE School Health nurses can:

- Design school health programs and emergency health plans
- Guide care for students living with a chronic or complex health condition
- Offer medical advice for 504 and Individual Education Program (IEP) plans
- Support case management
- Provide referrals to health care and community resources

“It’s amazing to be able to use technology to bring health care into schools,” says Sheila Freed, RN, eCARE School Health Director. “It doesn’t matter where a child lives; they should be able to be safe and taken care of in their school.”



Avera eCARE School Health currently serves 17 K-12 school districts across South Dakota and North Dakota and plans to expand throughout the Upper Midwest.

Expert Monitoring & Care for Diabetes

Chronic health conditions continue to rise among children. Type 1 diabetes is one of the most common chronic illnesses in childhood, affecting 1 in every 400 school children. This trend raises concerns among parents, school staff and medical professionals about how children with these conditions will be cared for while in school.

That's one reason why Deubrook Elementary, located in rural Toronto, S.D., recently added eCARE School Health services. "It definitely gives us a sense of relief," says Principal Mitch Reed. "With something as serious as diabetes, having a trained professional is huge for us and our students. It gives us that sense of security."

When it comes to caring for students with diabetes, eCARE School Health takes a proactive approach, working closely with the school staff and the child's parents.

"At the beginning of the school year we meet with the parents and school staff to establish a plan for the student," describes Freed. "We review their doctor's orders, look at their schedule and work together to figure out when we should check their blood sugar."

The eCARE School Health team also asks parents to describe what happens when their child has low blood sugar.

"That way we can include both the personal and general symptoms of low blood sugar and what to do about it in the student's plan of care. It's very directive to make it easy for staff to know what to do," she adds.

Avera eCARE[®] School Health

How does it work?



A student experiences an injury, illness or needs assistance with a health condition



The designated school staff and UAP contacts eCARE School Health and requests a two-way video session



An eCARE School Health registered nurse completes a health care assessment of the student through two-way, high-definition video and audio and advises the staff member on how to help the student



The staff member may be asked by the eCARE School Health nurse to use medical peripherals attached to the mobile cart to see the skin or inside the eyes, ears or mouth, or to listen to the lungs or heart



If needed, the eCARE School Health nurse contacts the student's parents to communicate information about the visit or a need for further follow-up care



Did You Know?

From August 2017 to January 2018, nearly 96 percent of students who had an eCARE School Health nurse video visit were able to stay in school instead of going home.

Managing diabetes can be complicated, especially for young students and those who are recently diagnosed. That's why an Avera eCARE registered nurse is available to meet with students for whatever they need throughout the day, such as help with counting carbohydrates, calculating and giving insulin injections and more.

The eCARE School Health team also works with each school's food service team to get menus and serving sizes so that they have an accurate picture for carb counting.

"One of our goals is to help kids work on skills so that they can gain independence," describes Freed. "We hope they learn the skills they need to manage their diabetes successfully and independently."

Avera eCARE also provides special education for the school staff, including the additional training needed to administer insulin and Glucagon™, an emergency medication for severe low blood sugar.

"It's a very collaborative effort between parents, students, school staff and our team."

Juggling Act

As a Lead Clerical at John Harris Elementary School in Sioux Falls, S.D., Deb Herold understands what it's like to wear many hats. Along with daily office duties, she also helps with students who aren't feeling well throughout the school day.





Partnering with eCARE School Health has provided the expertise, support and relief they needed, especially for a kindergarten student who has Type 1 diabetes.

“The nurses guide and direct his care, especially when his blood sugar is too high or low,” she describes. “He also wears a pump so sometimes we have to help him monitor his blood sugars through it. I’d never done that before, but the Avera eCARE nurses walk alongside us as we help him through his highs and lows.”

“We can take care of the basic things like general bumps, bruises, fevers, etc., but once we get into the head bumps, ear aches and chronic health conditions, the help of a nurse is incredible,” adds Herold. “Avera eCARE is like a security blanket for us. It adds one more level of confidence for us, and also for parents. It’s a gift.”

Decrease the Risk of Liability

“A lot of schools don’t realize the liability associated with school health,” adds Freed. “It’s required by South Dakota codified law and enforced by the South Dakota Board of Nursing that school staff have medication training before delivering medications to students. They also require the oversight of a registered nurse. If a school doesn’t follow these guidelines, they may not realize the potential liability they’re facing. With eCARE School Health, we can help schools decrease that risk of liability while providing better care to kids and giving staff peace of mind.”

Qualifying rural schools may be eligible for grants that can help fund the implementation of Avera eCARE School Health technology and services.

Avera eCARE, based in Sioux Falls, S.D., is the most robust telemedicine network in the world offering comprehensive health care services 24/7 via high-definition, interactive video and sophisticated computer monitoring equipment.

To learn more, visit www.AveraeCARE.org or call 605-322-2387.

