

# "Student Mental Health and School Nursing: Impact on Finland's Educational Excellence"

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**I, Linda Davis-Alldritt, have no  
conflicts of interest to report  
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# N Finland



# Education in Finland

- Nine years of compulsory education – grades 1 to 9 beginning at age 7.
- Options after 9<sup>th</sup> grade, include:
  - vocational institutions
  - upper secondary school and subsequently to universities
  - transition directly to working life
- Post-compulsory education in Finland is free for all European Union (EU) students.
  - Non-EU students approximately 4,000 to 20,000 Euros annually.
- Free daily meal for all students at comprehensive schools, upper secondary schools & vocational institutions.
- 14 comprehensive universities & 24 universities of applied sciences.

# Education & Health

Basic Education Act, stipulates:

- education is age and developmentally appropriate and supports healthy growth and development of the child;
- the school must cooperate with pupils' homes; and
- the pupil has a right to a safe learning environment and student welfare.

Student welfare is the responsibility of all those working in school and in student welfare services and is implemented in cooperation with families.

Student welfare promotes and maintains good learning, good mental and physical health and good social well-being of students.

# Health Services in Finland

## **Preventive services include:**

- prenatal care visits for pregnant women,
- regular check-ups for all children and
- services from family planning clinics.

## **Municipal health centers provide:**

- disease prevention
- health promotion and preventive mental health
- preventive dental care
- immunizations and
- breast and cervical cancer screenings.

**Health services are free of charge and available for all residents.**

# School Health Care Services in Finland Are Required by Law

- Health Care Act 1326/2010
- Government Decree 338/2011 mandates:
  - ❖ Maternity and child health clinic services,
  - ❖ School & student health services, and
  - ❖ Preventive oral health services for children & youth
- Pupil & Student Welfare Act 1287/2013
- Basic Education Act 628/1998 - pupil welfare services

# School Health Care System

## **Includes:**

- ✓ Advancing & monitoring the school/community environment for health & safety
- ✓ Annual monitoring of each student's growth, health, and well-being
- ✓ Supporting parents and guardians
- ✓ Providing oral health care for students
- ✓ Identifying students' needs for special support, medical examinations and management of chronic and permanent conditions
- ✓ Referring students for additional medical examinations and treatment as necessary

**The school health care system is free of charge and provided at or near the school.**

# School Health & School Nurses

- ❖ Governance & financing of the school health system is the responsibility of the municipality and National Ministries of Social Affairs & Health.
- ❖ Responsibility for the school health workforce belongs to the municipality.
- ❖ School health services are school-based and distinct from those provided in community clinics.

# School Health & School Nurses

- ❖ The school nurse is the key member in the school health team.
- ❖ School nurses hold titles as registered nurse and public health nurse.
- ❖ Recommended maximum: one full-time school nurse/600 pupils, or less.
- ❖ The team includes doctors, psychologists, counsellors, social workers, dentists, and others, such as nutrition specialists
- ❖ The school nurse is the school health advocate.
- ❖ The school nurse may refer directly to specialist care.

# Health Exams and Screening Tests

Table 6.3 Health examinations by country, age (grade) and health professional

Finland	Age (grade)*	Health professional
	Comprehensive health examination (and separate oral health examination) at 1st (7 years), 5th (11 years) and 8th (14 years) grades; basic examination once per academic year at all other grades from 2nd to 9th. 1st year of secondary education (16–17 years) by nurse; 2nd year by doctor	Comprehensive health examination by nurse and physician; basic health examinations by nurses and dentists
Rimpelä, A., et al. (2013)		

Table 6.4 Screening tests performed in school health services

Finland	Screening test						
	Height	Weight	Vision	Hearing	Blood pressure	Dental health	Other
	X	X	X	X	X	X	Growth, development and well-being
Rimpelä A. (2013)							

# School Health Examinations

Individual student health exams may include:

- ✓ screening for specific diseases and health problems,
- ✓ broader assessment of health status,
- ✓ physical and mental health counseling, and
- ✓ preventive health care.

Individual health planning include the student and parents.

# Regular School Health Examinations

Health examinations	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	4 <sup>th</sup> grade	5 <sup>th</sup> grade	6 <sup>th</sup> grade	7 <sup>th</sup> grade	8 <sup>th</sup> grade	9 <sup>th</sup> grade
Extensive health exam	X				X				X
Conducted by a public health nurse	Part of an extensive health exam	X	X	X	Part of an extensive health exam	X	X	X	Part of an extensive health exam
Conducted by a doctor	Part of an extensive health exam				Part of an extensive health exam				Part of an extensive health exam
Oral health exam	X				X				X

# Health Promotion/ Health Education

- ❖ Health education is a compulsory subject for upper level schools.
- ❖ Mental health is included in health education.
- ❖ Teachers of health education must have an additional 2 years of training.
- ❖ Teacher training includes “providing mental health skills.”

# Health Promotion

1. Support parenthood & enhance social support networks
2. Promote health, including mental health, for individuals & families in the following areas:
  - Psychosocial & physical development
  - Human relationships, rest & leisure time, ergonomics, nutrition, exercise, weight control, oral health and sexual health...
  - Prevention of violence, accidents, smoking, & use of alcohol & other drugs
  - Infection prevention
  - Awareness of the availability of social welfare and health care services
3. Support & promote independence, studying capacity, & healthy lifestyle...
  - Prevention of bullying
  - Providing information on occupational requirements & health hazards related to particular jobs & occupations

# School Health Promotion (SHP) Study

Every second year, Finland collects data from all schools for grades 8 & 9, upper secondary & vocational schools.

The survey is computerized and covers individual physical and emotional health, and health behaviors.

# School Health Promotion (SHP) Study

- The SHP provides information on educational outcomes.
- Survey results are analyzed by class, grade and school.
- School health ambassadors promote the use of data at local & regional levels.



**Current Student Health Challenges?**

# Mental Health Issues

Transition from hospital-based to community-based mental health care.

- From 2000 to 2011, suicide rates in Finland fell by 25.8%.
  - ❖ Despite this impressive fall, Finland's suicide rates remain one of the highest in the OECD.
- Finland's government has responded to high suicide rates with some success.
  - ❖ Tailored innovative programs, targeting particularly high-risk groups, including young adult men (age 15-29).

QUESTIONS?



# Resources / References

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