



## BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY

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[www.bianj.org](http://www.bianj.org)

Helpline: 1-800-669-4323

No Brain Injury is  
Too Mild to Ignore,  
or Too Severe to  
Lose Hope

## School Nurses: A Valuable Resource Following Brain Injury

*By Colette Crescas, RN, MPA, School Nurse*

Your child or adolescent's return to school following a brain injury can be a very frightening and unsettling time for both you and the child. The school nurse serves as a valuable resource to you and an advocate for your child in the school setting. It is important for parents of students who have sustained a brain injury to establish open lines of communication with the school nurse. Regardless of the severity, once the injury occurs, the parent should be in contact with the school nurse to discuss all aspects of the injury and the estimated date of return to school. The student's medical team should also be in contact with the school nurse to share information and inform her of any healthcare needs the student may have.

Some of the healthcare needs include the use of special medical equipment, continued rehabilitation in school, seizure control, spasticity, safety precautions, headaches, and pain. Other health concerns include medical procedures required during the school day, medication whether taken at home or during the school day, and any possible side effects. The child's level of activity and the need for short rest periods during a full school day should be evaluated. The earlier the school nurse is made aware of these needs, the more prepared she can be in making the student comfortable while at school.

In addition, prior to the student's return to school, the parent should request that the nurse be involved in the discussion of the student's educational plan. The nurse will then be able to provide support as needed. For example, if the student tires easily, the teacher and the school nurse can work together to allow for rest time in the nurse's office. Working collaboratively, the teacher can also inform the nurse about any difficulty the child is having in the classroom, both cognitively and socially.

Depending on the severity of the injury, the child may remember his capability prior to the injury and may feel frustrated now because of difficulty recalling facts and/or organizing his work, etc. He may also see a change in relationships with his peer group because of cognitive deficits that were not present before, and because of reduced social skills. The nurse can offer emotional support and a "safe place" for the child to vent his frustrations. At times, the student may experience behavioral issues and may need a few minutes away from the classroom. The nurse can also provide support at this time. When the parent, medical team, and school nurse work together, they can anticipate certain changes and help the student develop coping skills that he can draw upon in a variety of situations.



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School nurses are an integral part of the student's educational and health team. They can help to ease the stress of returning to school following a Traumatic Brain Injury. The school nurse's goal is to afford the student with a TBI a smooth transition upon returning to school and to provide continued ongoing support.

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*Colette Crescas, RN, MPA, is a school nurse at Unity Charter School in Morristown, NJ. She enjoys writing and has published several articles for nursing periodicals.*

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