



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
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January 9, 2008

TO: Washington State Board of Health Members

FROM: Dr. Diana Yu, SBOH Member

SUBJECT: **PROPOSAL TO ELIMINATE SCOLIOSIS SCREENING MANDATE**

Background and Summary:

According to chapter 28A.210 RCW, the Board has statutory authority for setting procedures and standards for scoliosis screening in conjunction with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The current rule (Chapter 246-762 WAC) specifies that each public school is required to provide scoliosis screening for all students in grades five, seven, and nine unless students have a valid written exemption.

Over the past five years, research has called into question whether screening asymptomatic adolescents for idiopathic scoliosis (sideways curvature of the spine of unknown origin) results in detection at an earlier stage than would have occurred without the screening. The accuracy of the most common screening test - the forward bending test with or without a scoliometer - has also proven to be variable.

As a result of these research findings, OSPI Health Services and school nursing leadership convened an expert workgroup to examine this issue in greater detail. The School Nurse Scoliosis Workgroup reviewed the current practice of mandated screening in Washington schools, best practice, and state and national data. They concluded that the mandate to conduct scoliosis screening in schools should be rescinded. This position is being lead by the School Nurses Organization of Washington (SNOW) and is supported by OSPI. An act to repeal statutes related to scoliosis screening in schools was introduced during the last Legislative session and is likely to receive additional consideration during the current session.

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, the Scoliosis Research Society, the Pediatric Orthopaedic Society of North America, and the American Academy of Pediatrics recognize that while scoliosis screening has limitations, the potential benefits that patients with idiopathic scoliosis receive from early treatment of their deformities can be substantial. Their 2007 position statement can be found in Tab 7 of your packets. Conversely, the U.S. Preventive Services

Task Force, Canada, and Great Britain have not found sufficient evidence to support school screening.

Today, we will have an opportunity to learn more about why SNOW is recommending that scoliosis screening in schools be eliminated.

Recommended Board Action

The Board may choose to consider, amend if necessary, and adopt the following motion:

Motion: The Board accepts the School Nurses Organization of Washington's recommendation that it support legislation that would rescind mandatory school-based scoliosis screening in Washington State.