

GUIDELINES—Guidelines for Medical Examinations of Students

In light of recent caselaw related to appropriate compliance with comprehensive medical examinations of students pursuant to Section 1402 of the School Code, the following is a summary of the relevant law and policy suggestions relating to the medical examination of students.

Section 1402 of the Public School Code of 1949 requires every school district in Pennsylvania to provide school-aged children with a comprehensive medical examination at certain designated times in their academic careers. Specifically, Section 1402(e) states:

The school physicians of each district or joint board *shall make a medical examination and a comprehensive appraisal of the health of every child of school age:*

- (1) upon original entry into school in the Commonwealth,
- (2) while in sixth grade,
- (3) while in eleventh grade, and
- (4) prior to the issuance of a farm or domestic service permit unless the child has been given a scheduled or special medical examination within the preceding four months.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health regulations require that the medical examination pursuant to Section 1402 “shall be conducted carefully and in sufficient detail to command medical respect and to provide an educational experience for the child and his parents.” 22 Pa. Code 23.2(d). Although Department of Health regulations do not enumerate the necessary components of a “detailed” medical examination, its Division of School Health prints two separate forms, the “School Health Record” and the “Private Physician’s Report of Physical Examination of Pupil of School Age,” which provide some guidance as to the scope of the referenced exams. Those forms contain an identical list of seventeen (17) components for the medical examination for which the physician must determine whether their status is “normal” or “abnormal”.

Under Section 1407 of the Public School Code, students can have their own family physicians perform the required examination in lieu of the school physical at their own expense, so long as a “Private Physician Report” is completed and submitted to the school district before the scheduled date for the school medical examinations. *See*, 24 P.S. 14-1407.

The following suggestions are intended to assist school districts in complying with Sections 1402 and 1407 of the Public School Code, while alleviating any confusion or concern regarding the content or scope of the medical examinations. The goal is to keep parents and students informed and to provide avenues for expressing concerns.

1. The school district should provide all students at the end of the school year, prior to the year of the scheduled examination with information regarding the school physical requirement. That information should be provided to parents with the approved state form which a family physician could complete if a physical is done privately.

2. The school district should encourage students and their parents to have their own family physicians perform the required examinations.
3. For those students who do not have their own family physicians perform the required examination, the school district should send home a detailed letter outlining the *exact components of the medical examination* developed in conjunction with the school physician who will be performing the examination and the Division of School Health's publications entitled "School Health Record" and the "Private Physician's Report of Physical Examination of Pupil of School Age." The letter should also state the *identity of the physician and the exact date of the schedule examination*. This letter should be sent well in advance of the scheduled examination, should encourage parental attendance during the exam, and should provide parents with a contact person in the event that they have any inquiries or concerns.

Clients who have questions regarding issues discussed in this article, or any education law matter, should feel free to call us at 215-345-9111.