



Accompanying students transported by ambulance

Representatives of the NSW Department of Education and Communities and the Ambulance Service of NSW met recently to discuss protocols when an ambulance is called to a school to transport an injured or ill student to hospital.

In all circumstances the health and safety of the student is the key determining factor in decision making. In accordance with the Department's duty of care, it is essential that first aid be provided to an injured or ill student and emergency services be contacted where required, to arrange for an ambulance to attend the school and provide other appropriate support and advice.

When an ambulance is required, parents, carers or authorised emergency contacts for the student must be contacted as soon as possible so that, where possible, they may be in attendance when the ambulance arrives. To help ensure that parents /carers are contacted promptly, schools should regularly remind parents to notify the school if there are any changes to their contact details or to the contact details of other people nominated as emergency contacts.

If there is no parent or carer at the school when the ambulance arrives, the Ambulance Service of NSW has advised that it is helpful for a staff member to accompany a student in the ambulance, particularly when the student is younger and will benefit from having a familiar person travelling with them in the ambulance. However there will also be circumstances, particularly with very serious accidents, where paramedics will specifically not require a staff member to accompany them.

The decision to send a staff member in an ambulance with a student needs to be determined at the individual school level and on a case by case basis. However, the principal has responsibility to ensure adequate safety and supervision for the students remaining on the school site and for determining whether or

not a staff member is available taking into consideration the operational requirements of the school (so, for example, a first aid officer may not be the appropriate person to travel with the student if no other qualified first aid person is at the school).

There may be circumstances, particularly for smaller schools, when a staff member may not be available to accompany the student. The principal is responsible for making this decision and Ambulance Service of NSW paramedics cannot insist on a staff member accompanying a student in an ambulance.

It is acknowledged that each case will be different and it is not possible to specify the situations when a staff member should accompany a student in the event of an accident.