

# Climate Change Impacts on Child Health

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## *Position Brief*

### **SUMMARY**

It is the position of the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) that climate change is a serious threat and present danger to the health, safety, well-being, and future of our nation's children. Climate change effects include increased rates and severity of communicable and non-communicable diseases, severe weather events, threats to the food and water supply, negative impacts on mental health, and exacerbation of social and health inequities (Meyer & Pachauri, 2014). In addition, detrimental climate-related effects are harming the ecosystems in which we live (Reis et al., 2015). Children are among the most vulnerable to these threats, especially those who live in poverty, suffer from chronic disease, and are otherwise disadvantaged (Haines & Ebi, 2019)

### **RATIONALE**

Immediate, comprehensive, and bold action is needed in order to avoid the most catastrophic effects of the changing climate (Masson-Delmotte et al., 2018). Evidence-based policies and investments may, in fact, lead to improved health and equity (Rudolf, 2018). School Nurse Scope and Standards of Practice and ethical considerations support the involvement of registered professional school nurses (hereinafter referred to as school nurses) in efforts to combat and mitigate climate change health effects (ANA & NASN, 2017; NASN, 2016a). School nurses can improve the health of their students and communities by implementing the *Framework for 21st Century School Nursing Practice™* principle of Community/Public Health, including the practice components addressing environmental health, social determinants of health, and health equity (NASN, 2016b). As school and community healthcare providers, school nurses are ideally positioned to raise awareness of climate change effects on health by sharing evidence-based information, implementing and supporting public health campaigns, and advocating for effective actions via local, state, and federal legislation and public policy.

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“To optimize student health, safety and learning, it is the position of the National Association of School Nurses that a professional registered school nurse is present in every school all day, every day.”

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