

PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL SCOLIOSIS SCREENING PROGRAM

Administrative Guidelines for School Personnel

DEFINITION

Scoliosis – A lateral and rotary curvature of the spine, most commonly found during the adolescent growth period.

Screening – The U.S. Commission on Chronic Illness defined screening as “The presumptive identification of unrecognized disease or defects by the application of tests, examinations, or other procedures which can be applied rapidly. Screening tests sort out apparently well persons who probably do not have a disease from those who probably do have the disease. A screening test is not intended to be diagnostic. Persons with positive or suspicious findings must be referred to their physicians for diagnosis and necessary treatment.”¹

Scoliosis Screening – Systematic observation of the spine to detect deviations from normal.

LEGAL BASIS

The Pennsylvania Department of Health has adopted regulations requiring each child in grades 6 and 7 and age appropriate (11 and 12 years of age) children in ungraded classes to be screened for scoliosis (Appendix 1).

RATIONALE FOR SCHOOL SCOLIOSIS SCREENING PROGRAM

It is estimated that approximately 4% of school-age children will have a curvature in varying degrees. The effect of scoliosis depends upon its severity, how early it is detected, and how promptly it is treated. Rate of treatment is 2 per 1,000 children in the target age group. Early identification and management of scoliosis is the purpose of the state screening program.

GOAL OF SCHOOL SCOLIOSIS SCREENING PROGRAM

The goal of a mass scoliosis screening program mandated by the Pennsylvania Department of Health’s regulations is the prevention of severe spinal deformity and its consequence.

¹ Commission on Chronic Illness: Chronic Illness in the United States, Vol. 1, Prevention of Chronic Illness, Cambridge. Harvard Press, 1957, p. 45.