



Spinal Screening Requirement

According to 25 TAC § 37.14821, all students in grades six and nine (or five and eight), in public and private schools must be screened for abnormal spinal curvature before the end of the school year. If they enter school after the scheduled screening has been performed, they must be screened within 120 days of admission. This requirement may also be fulfilled by screening performed by a professional or by screening that has been performed within the previous year. As with immunizations and vision and hearing screening, parents have the option of substituting a professional examination by a licensed health practitioner in lieu of a school screening. Parents may also seek exemption from spinal screening because of religious conflict but a signed affidavit from the religious organization must be submitted to the school in lieu of screening. The chief administrator of the school is responsible for ensuring compliance of all students, either by actual screening or affidavits of exemption. Registered nurses (RNs) are not required to be certified by DSHS as spinal screeners but are responsible for the planning, implementation and evaluation of the program.

Students should be screened during their growth spurt, ages 10-14 years (Grades 5- 9), to detect spinal deformities early. The screening requirement for children entering grade 6 and 9 may be met if the child was screened for spinal deformities during the previous year.

Who May Screen?

Health aides, licensed vocational nurses, physical education teachers, classroom teachers and volunteers may screen if they participate in a workshop conducted by a DSHS- approved instructor and have become certified according to the Spinal Screening Program Guidelines. School districts are responsible for maintaining documentation of state certification for the spinal screeners in the district. Each district will need to be able to confirm each spinal screener certification, if an inquiry arises. Licensed professional health practitioners such as RNs, physicians, chiropractors and physical therapists may screen if their course of study included screening for abnormal spinal curvature or if they received formal advanced instruction as part of their continuing education.

Spinal Screening

Each student must be observed from the front, side and back:

- While standing straight; and
- While gradually bending forward, with the arms hanging down and palms touching, as if diving into a pool.

The screener observes for head misalignment to one side of the cleft in the buttocks, one shoulder or hip higher than the other, a prominence of the rib cage or the small of the back, unequal distance between arms and body, and a curve in the spine. Students must take off their shoes prior to screening. Girls must wear a sports bra, halter, or bikini top in order for the screener to visualize the spine and scapulae.