

SURVEY RESULTS

Education Workers' Steering Committee

Medical Procedures and Personal Care

**Strength in
numbers.**

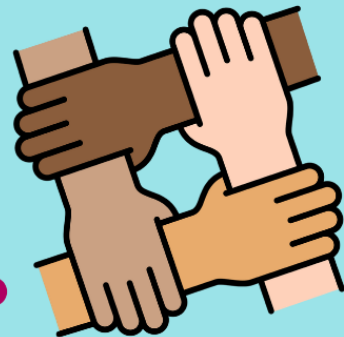


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A message from the Education Workers' Steering Committee

Education support workers play a critical role in the day-to-day functioning of schools and supporting student success. In addition to maintaining safe, clean, and organized learning environments, many education support workers are increasingly relied upon to provide direct personal care and assist with medical procedures for students with complex and diverse needs. This work is essential to ensuring students can safely and inclusively participate in learning.

As expectations placed on education support workers continue to expand, these workers have raised serious concerns with CUPE about training, staffing levels, health and safety, liability, and the adequacy of policies governing this work. In response, the Education Workers Steering Committee (EWSC) partnered with CUPE Research to conduct a province-wide survey of education support workers.

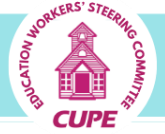
The findings of the survey show the realities education support workers face in their workplaces and demonstrate that changes are needed to provide safer working conditions, appropriate training and supports, and greater recognition of the indispensable role these workers play in Saskatchewan's public education system.

Recommendations

The EWSC calls on the provincial government to take the following actions:

1. Establish a taskforce that includes education workers, school divisions, and qualified health care professionals to review medical and personal care duties in schools and develop safe, consistent standards, at no cost to education workers or school divisions.
2. Clearly identify medical procedures that must be performed by certified health care or home care professionals and ensure those professionals are integrated into the school setting as needed, so students can attend school safely and inclusively without placing inappropriate medical responsibilities on education workers.
3. Ensure education workers are not required to perform procedures without choice and that any training or certification related to such procedures is voluntary, appropriate to the role, and fully supported by the employer, including paid time and costs.

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4. Ensure that only properly qualified and certified professionals provide training related to medical procedures, ensuring education workers' rights, scope of practice, and workplace safety are fully respected.
5. Provide clear policies, documentation protocol, and training so education workers understand their responsibilities, limits, and protections while supporting students with personal or medical needs.

The CUPE Saskatchewan Education Workers' Steering Committee (EWSC) represents approximately 7,000 education support workers across Saskatchewan's K-12 education system. Working in more than 40 classifications, EWSC members include caretakers and maintenance staff, educational assistants, school bus drivers, library technicians, administrative staff and information technology support, social workers, counsellors, and nutrition and community workers.

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted as an online Lime survey from January 27 to February 11, 2026.

The questionnaire was distributed via email to CUPE education locals in Saskatchewan. Local presidents distributed the survey to their members.

The survey asked respondents what medical procedures they provide as a part of their job, whether they received training for those medical procedures, and if so, who provided the training. The survey also asked respondents what personal care they provide in their jobs, whether they have received safety training, and if they are aware of school division administrative policies and liability insurance as they relate to medical procedures.

In addition to these questions, survey respondents were provided the opportunity to add additional comments in an open-ended format. Approximately 20% of survey respondents (197 individuals) took the time to make comments. A selection of these responses is incorporated into this report and provides additional context to the themes most frequently raised in the open-ended answers.

Participation varied by school division, making comparisons between individual school divisions difficult. As a result, only province-wide data is presented in this report.

A total of 980 completed surveys were submitted.

Response by Job Classification

Of the 980 education support workers who responded to this survey, just over three quarters (76%) were educational assistants (EAs). Workers from a wide variety of classifications responded to the survey, as shown below.

Response by Job Classification	
Administrative Assistant	73
Bus Driver	36
Caretaker	37
Educational Assistant	745
Library Worker	40
Student Counsellor	4
Other	43
No answer	2
Total number of responses	980

Forty-three respondents (4%) selected “other” as their job classification. These included Wellness and Nutrition Coordinators, Indigenous Community Workers, Social Workers, Speech Language Assistants, Information Technology Workers, Records Management, and Facility Maintenance Workers. This category also includes a few CUPE members who hold more than one job classification in their school division (for example, one member works both as a Bus Driver and an Educational Assistant).

Summary of Findings

Education support workers in Saskatchewan perform a wide range of medical procedures as a part of their jobs. These include:

- Giving oral medications
- Giving injection medications / insulin
- Epi-pens
- Tube feeding
- Wound care (dressing changes)
- Suctioning
- Tracheotomy care
- Catheterizations
- Seizure related care
- Monitoring blood sugar for diabetic students
- Physiotherapy
- Administering medications through feeding tubes
- Inhalers / eye drops
- Basic first aid

The most common medical procedures performed by surveyed CUPE members were:

- Giving oral medications – 28%
- Epi-pens – 18%
- Tube feeding – 16%
- Wound care (dressing changes) – 13%

Educational assistants are the classification of workers most likely to perform medical procedures at work; however, administrative assistants, library workers, school counsellors, and bus drivers also reported performing medical procedures.

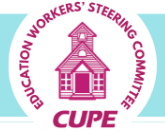
Many education support workers reported they have not received training in the medical procedures they perform.

Of those who received training, more than 50% of the training was provided by someone other than a health care professional. Training was often provided by parents or coworkers.

The most common themes raised by survey respondents in their open-ended comments include:

- Many workers told us they don't feel they received proper training to provide medical procedures to the students they support.

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- Several respondents requested training in basic first aid and CPR.
- Many education support workers reported feeling stressed about providing medical care to students.
- Some education support workers have refused to perform medical duties in the past because they weren't trained.
- Some workers suggested that school divisions should hire nurses and care aides to assist with medically complex students.
- Some long-time workers told us their jobs had changed over time.
- Many workers don't believe they are paid fairly for the duties they perform.
- Education workers are concerned for the safety and wellbeing of their students.

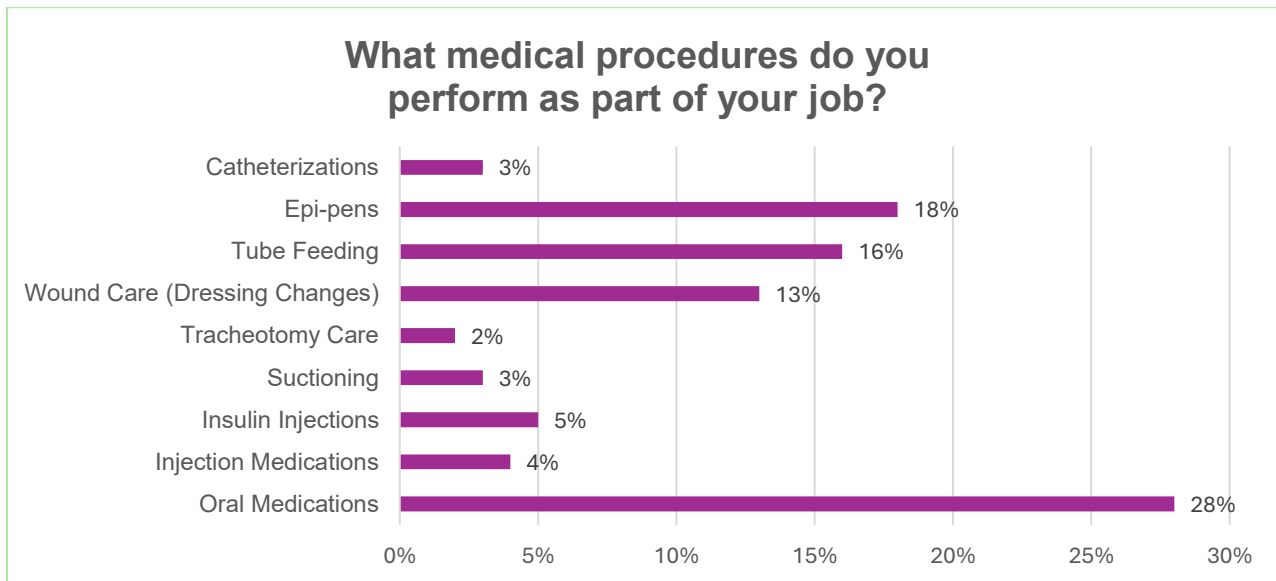
More than three quarters of survey respondents didn't know if their school division has administrative policies that require them to perform medical procedures, or if they are covered under their school division's liability insurance when performing medical procedures.

Medical Procedures being performed by Education Support Workers

Education support workers were provided with a list of nine separate medical procedures and asked whether they perform these as a part of their job.

The most common medical procedures performed by surveyed CUPE members include:

- Giving oral medications – 28%
- Epi-pens – 18%
- Tube feeding – 16%
- Wound care (dressing changes) – 13%



In addition to the listed procedures, those who responded to the survey provided comments on medical procedures they provide that were not listed. These include:

- Seizure related care – seizure protocols, VNS magnets, seizure medications
- Monitoring and managing blood sugar levels for diabetic students
- Physiotherapy
- Administer medications through feeding tubes
- Administering inhalers / eye drops
- Basic first aid

One school social worker expressed concern that the list of medical procedures in the survey did not reflect the psychological/emotional support education support workers provide, noting they deal with suicidal clients on an ongoing basis in their job.

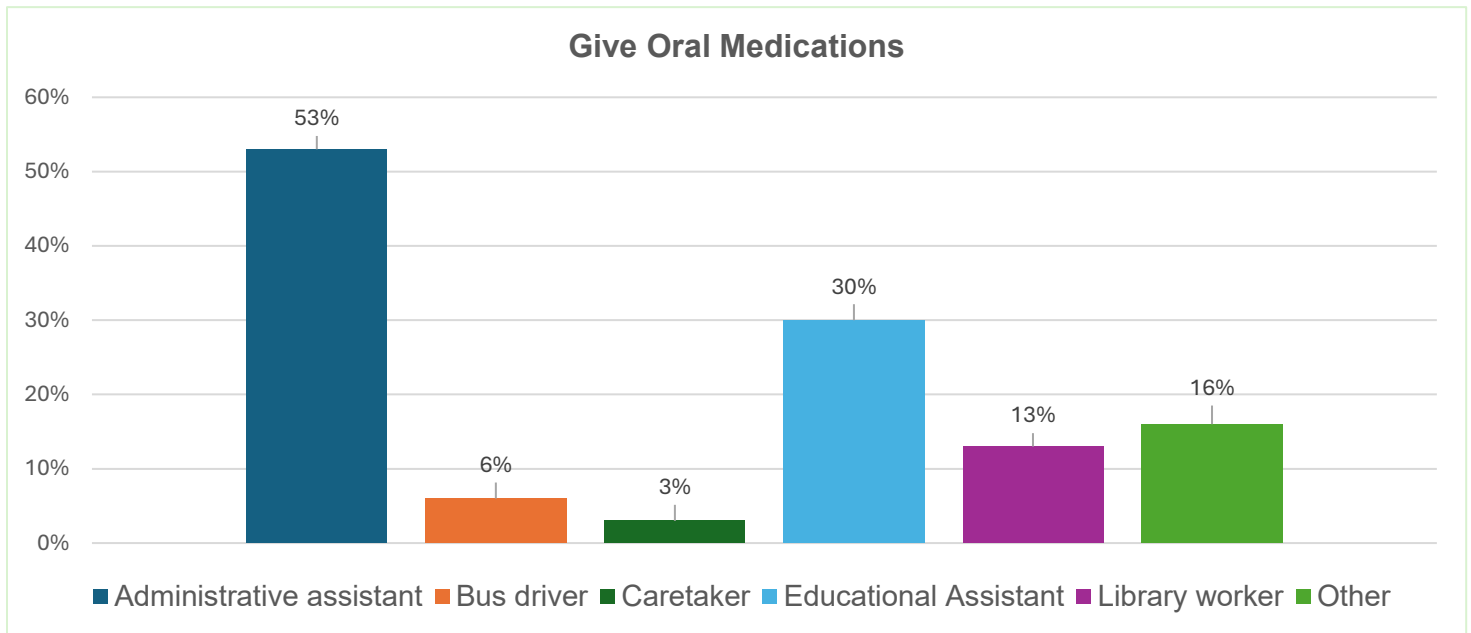
Educational assistants were the classification of workers most likely to perform medical procedures in their job; however, administrative assistants, library workers, school counsellors, and bus drivers also reported performing medical procedures.

Giving Oral Medications

A significant proportion of educational assistants and administrative assistants give oral medications at work.

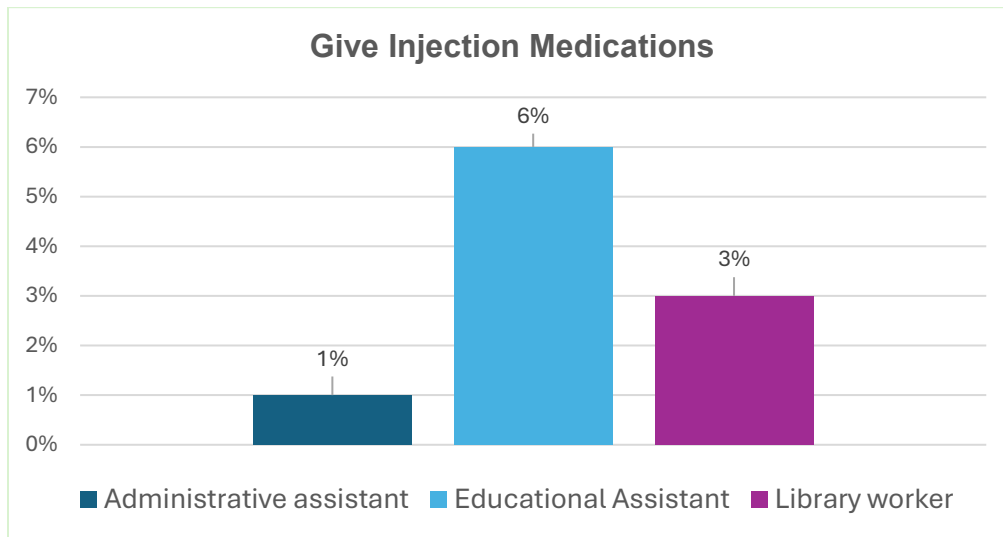
Almost one-third (30%) of educational assistants reported they give oral medications as a part of their job, while slightly more than half (52%) of the 73 administrative assistants who responded to the survey also said they give oral medications.

Five library workers also reported giving oral medications, as did two bus drivers and one caretaker.



Giving Injection Medications / Insulin

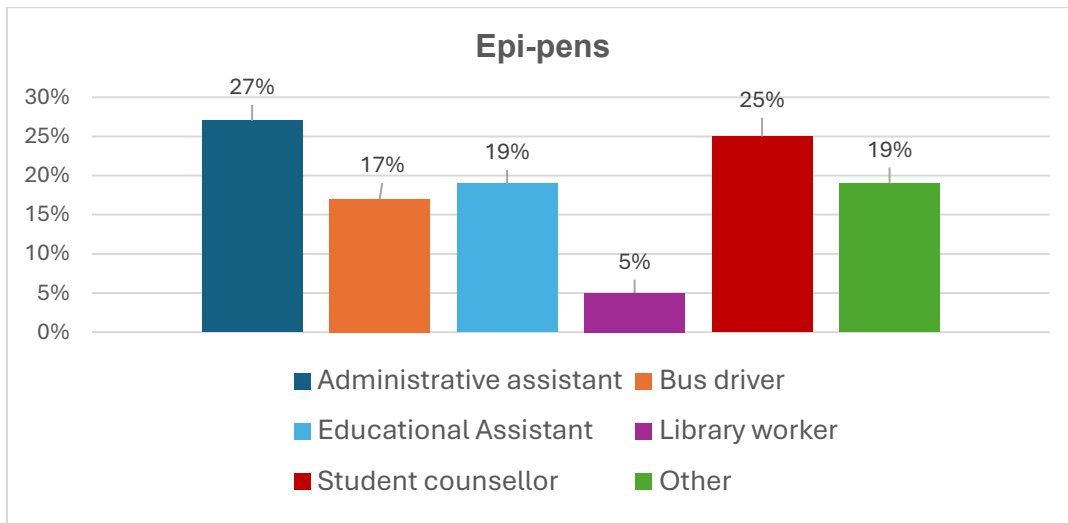
Forty-one educational assistants (6% of respondents) reported giving injection medications as part of their job. One administrative assistant and one library worker also give injection medications.



When asked specifically about giving insulin injections, the numbers were very similar, with 46 educational assistants reporting they perform this duty. Three administrative assistants give insulin injections, as did two other survey respondents who categorized their classification as “other.”

Epi-Pens

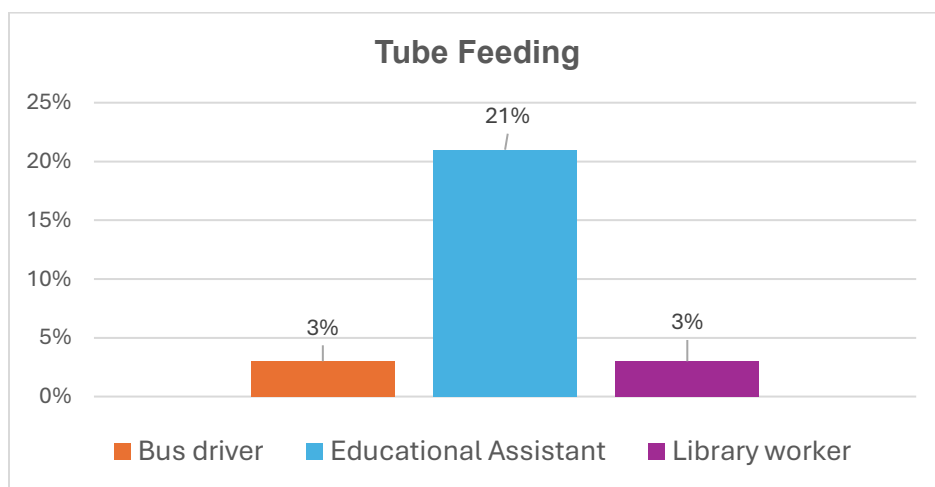
Twenty percent (20%) of education support workers reported that epi-pens are part of their job. In contrast with more specialized medical procedures, some of which were almost exclusively performed by educational assistants, CUPE members in almost all classifications answered “yes,” that this is part of their job.



Tube Feeding

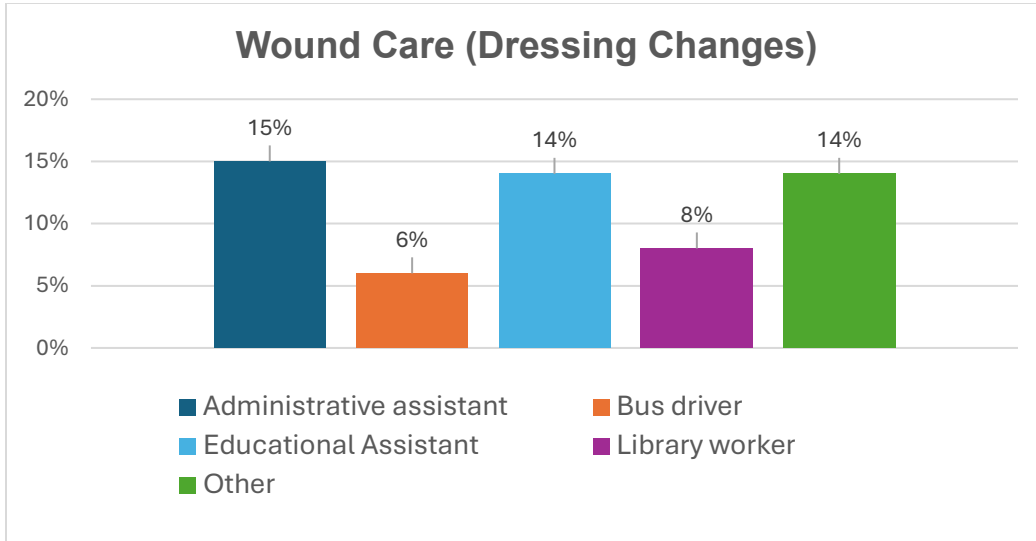
Tube feeding was almost exclusively performed by educational assistants. More than one in five EA’s reported that tube feeding was part of their job (21%).

One bus driver and one library worker also reported they do this as part of their job.



Wound Care (Dressing Changes)

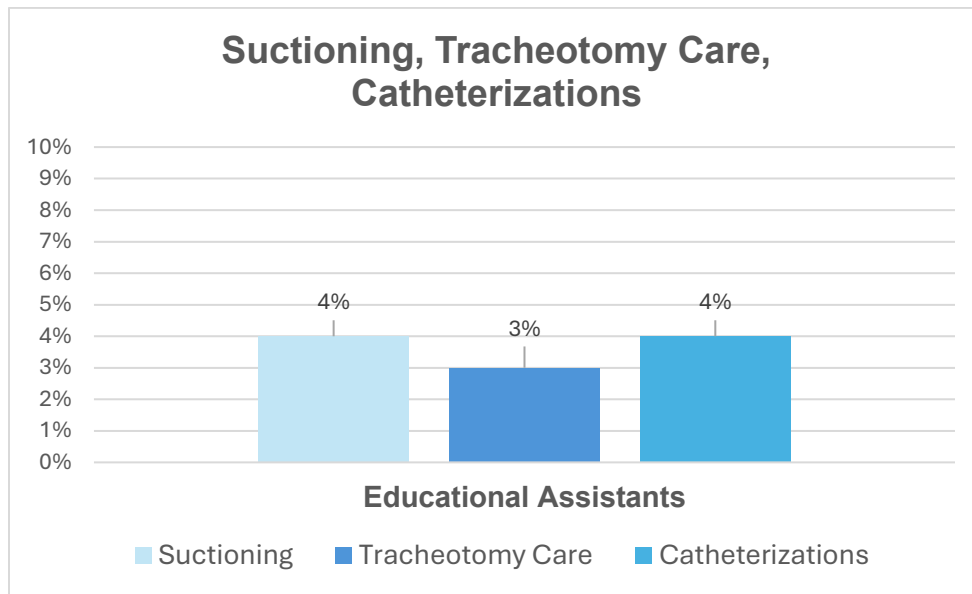
Wound care (dressing changes) is primarily performed by educational assistants (14% of respondents) and administrative assistants (15% of respondents). Overall, 13% of CUPE members who responded to this survey reported they perform this duty in their job.



Suctioning, Tracheotomy Care, and Catheterizations

A smaller proportion of educational assistants perform suctioning, tracheotomy care, and catheterizations to support the needs of their students.

Nineteen educational assistants reported they perform tracheotomy care, 30 reported catheterizations were a duty, and 31 perform suctioning in their work.



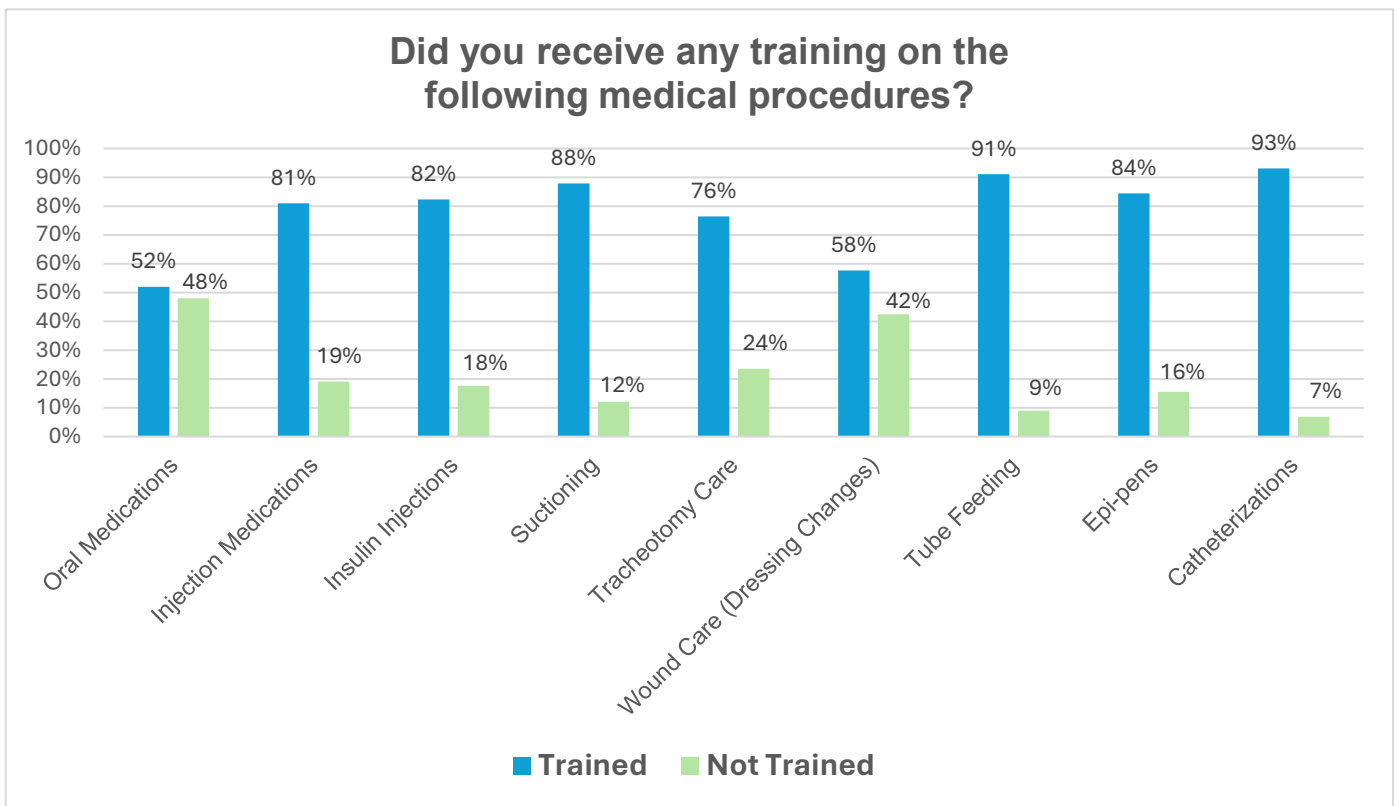
No other classifications reported performing tracheotomy care or catheterizations as a part of their job.

Training on Medical Procedures

The survey asked those members who said “yes” to performing medical procedures, whether they have been trained in each medical procedure they are performing.

Education workers were least likely to have received training for giving oral medications – 48% had received no training. Of those performing wound care (dressing changes), 42% reported they had not been trained.

Training rates were higher with other medical procedures; however, between 7% and 24% of workers reported not being trained in each of the nine listed medical procedures.



First Aid and CPR

This survey did not ask education support workers if they are trained in basic first aid or CPR.

Several respondents added comments to their survey, requesting to be trained in first aid and/or CPR. The following is a small sample of verbatim comments from survey respondents:

“First Aid training would be a great asset.”

“I have asked repeatedly for re-certification for first aid and have been refused multiple times. We have a high needs child that has seizures and no EA’s have first aid.”

“I have CPR and first aid training that the division pays for. You are supposed to have so many staff that have the training. I am the only support staff along with one other person.”

Who is Training Education Workers?

Survey respondents who had received training were asked who provided the training.

	Trained by a coworker	Trained by a Health Professional	Trained by a manager	Trained by a parent	Someone other than those listed
Oral Medications	41%	14%	6%	27%	12%
Injection Medications	21%	44%	0%	26%	9%
Insulin Injections	10%	26%	2%	52%	10%
Suctioning	31%	31%	0%	28%	10%
Tracheotomy Care	15%	46%	0%	31%	8%
Wound Care (Dressing Changes)	24%	39%	0%	8%	29%
Tube Feeding	39%	35%	0%	20%	6%
Epi-pens	14%	49%	2%	13%	22%
Catheterizations	37%	19%	0%	41%	4%

Of those who received training, more than 50% of the training was provided by someone other than a health care professional, for all the nine listed procedures.

Health care professionals were more likely to be the trainer for injection medications (44%), tracheotomy care (46%), wound care/dressing changes (39%), and epi-pens (49%).

Training for suctioning was just as likely to be provided by a co-worker as by a health care professional (31% respectively), followed closely by a parent (28%).

Parents were most likely to provide training in insulin injections (52%) and catheterizations (41%).

Co-workers were most likely to provide training on oral medications (41%) and tube feeding (39%).

Education Support Workers Want More Training

While some survey respondents felt they had appropriate training, many told us they do not feel they have been properly trained to provide medical procedures to students:

“The training we received is not adequate to perform medical duties.”

“I am on seizure watch and am to administer medication if/when one occurs, even though I have no training in this.”

“Many times I have felt that we were not given the proper training BEFORE we work with a student who requires many special needs/care.”

“I have previously worked for the SHA so I am lucky having previous knowledge of the tasks we get assigned. Others are not so lucky and their training may consist of another staff member showing them how to do it.”

“Opportunities for training either online or in person is something I am extremely interested in.”

Additional Comments

Some workers told us they feel stressed about providing medical care to students:

“We had a student whose blood sugar would go so low he needed constant observation and intervention. It was very stressful as I am an EA, not a nurse.”

“It is very stressful dealing with the lack of training.”

Many members told us they don't believe they are paid fairly for the duties they perform.

“Our wages don't reflect what we are expected to do. Safety, medical needs, speech, mental health.”

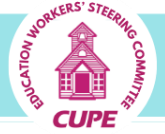
“I do not feel like as an EA the workload we carry is compensated by our wage.”

Some education support workers told us they had refused to perform medical duties in the past because they felt uncomfortable or weren't trained.

“I have refused to administer insulin in an emergency situation by strong recommendation of a paramedic.”

Some long-time workers told us their jobs had changed over time.

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“Over my 20 year career, the role of an EA has shifted and is unrecognizable. I am not a medical care aide.”

Other workers suggested that school divisions need to hire nurses and care aides to assist with medically complex students.

“We do have nurses in our school. But I understand many schools do not have this option.”

“It would be nice to see school divisions implement care aids to their teams.”

Education workers expressed concern for the safety and wellbeing of their students.

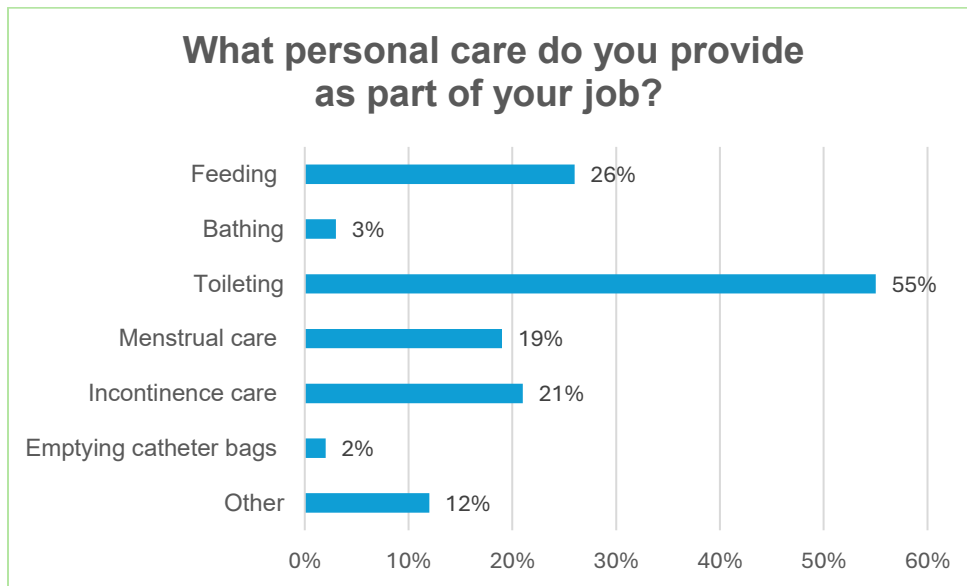
“Every student has the right to be in school. Is there, or could there be a clause to include something to the effect of every student has the right to be safely at school?”

“We do what a nurse should be doing. We do it because it’s what the student needs.”

Personal Care

Education support workers were asked what types of personal care they provide to students in their job.

More than half of survey respondents (55%) assist students with toileting, and more than one quarter (26%) assist with feeding. Incontinence care and menstrual care are the next most frequently provided, with 21% and 19% of workers providing that care, respectively.



Survey respondents also noted they regularly lift/transfer students, assist with personal hygiene skills, and provide personal hygiene care, including, but not limited to, face washing, hair brushing, and brushing teeth.

Training – Physical and Psychological Safety

Education support workers were asked if they had received training in five programs which address physical and psychological safety.

Thirty-five percent (35%) of those who responded to the survey had received TLR training (transferring, lifting, repositioning) and training in non-violent crisis intervention (NVCi). Only 13% of respondents had received ASSIST/ASK mental health training, and 7% had received SRT (Safety Risk Response) training.

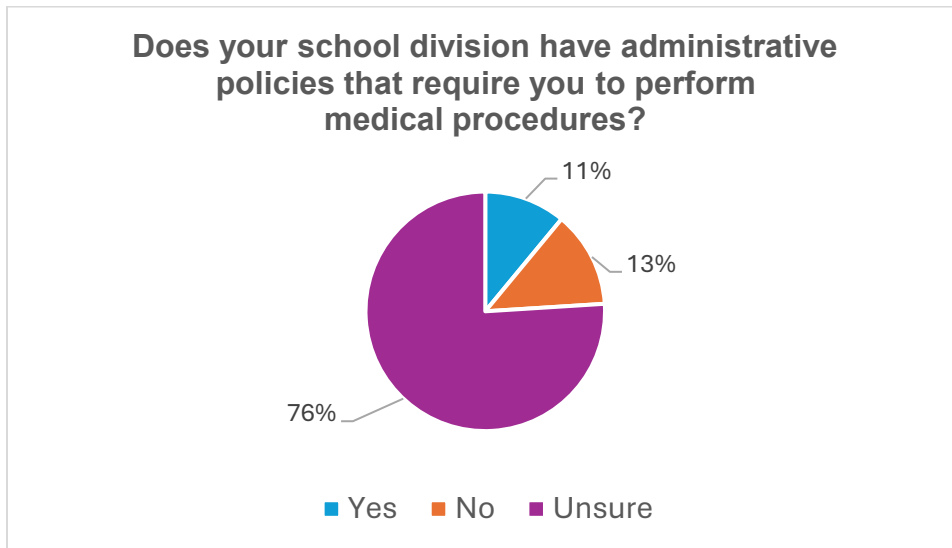
Generally, a higher proportion of educational assistants received training in these programs than was the case with other classifications of education workers. The one exception was ASSIST/ASK mental health training. Half of student counsellors who responded to this survey reported they had received ASSIST/ASK training.

	TLR (Transferring Lifting Repositioning)	SRT (Safety Risk Response)	NVCi (Non-violent crisis intervention)	PART (Personal assault response training)	ASSIST/ASK (Mental Health Training)
Administrative Assistant	10%	1%	14%	3%	4%
Bus Driver	8%	0%	3%	0%	3%
Caretaker	3%	5%	3%	5%	3%
Educational Assistant	43%	9%	41%	31%	13%
Library Worker	13%	3%	23%	5%	10%
Student Counsellor	0%	0%	25%	0%	50%
Total	35%	7%	35%	24%	13%

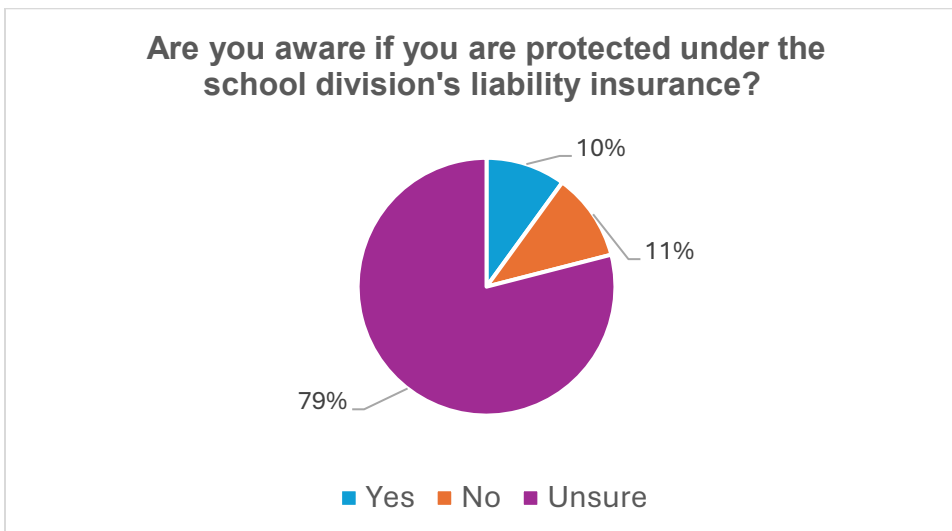
Multiple survey respondents commented that they lift and/or transfer students but have never received any training on how to safely perform this duty.

Administrative Policies and Liability Insurance

The survey found that most education support workers (76%) were unsure if their school division has administrative policies that require them to perform medical procedures.



An even greater proportion of respondents (79%) were unsure about whether they are protected under the school division's liability insurance when performing medical procedures. Only 10% of respondents responded "yes" when asked "Are you aware if you are protected under the school division's liability insurance?"



Prepared by T. Sabourin, CUPE Research /mg.cope491