



Advocate for School-Based Health During National School-Based Health Awareness Month - Virtually!

If 2020 has shown our community of school-based health providers anything, it's that school-based health care is essential for keeping children, families and communities healthy. The School-Based Health Alliance is proud to support the work of thousands of school-based health centers across the country who are doing their best to reach children during this time of uncertainty to provide excellent care, including vital mental health support.

To ensure that school-based health centers can continue to serve our communities and reach even more children, the 2021 National School-Based Health Care Awareness Month is an opportunity to advocate your support of SBHCs with your elected representatives.

While this year will be different in many ways from past advocacy campaigns, it is also an opportunity to use technology to make visiting your representatives easier than ever before. This guide provides tips on how to set up and conduct a virtual visit. We are encouraging you to consider creating a "virtual tour" of school-based health centers for policymakers to see what is happening at a local site.

Scheduling a Visit with Your Legislator

While COVID-19 has restricted in-person visits, members of Congress and their staff continue to meet with constituents virtually.

In order to schedule a visit, consider this timeline:

- Approximately two weeks out, invite your legislator by phone or email either directly or through their staff. If you do not have the contact information for your legislator's scheduler or health and education staff, please **contact Suzanne Mackey** (smackey@sbh4all.org)
- Plan an agenda that will give an overview of what your SBHCs have been doing to ensure student health during COVID-19, as well as highlight their current challenges. Meetings are typically only 15-30 minutes long, so make sure to assign speaking roles to each participant.
 - A potential outline for a meeting:
 - Introductions
 - SBHC 101
 - Tell your story. How has COVID affected your SBHC and community, what have you been doing?
 - Choose a few talking points (mental health care, telehealth, etc.)
 - Asks:
 - Any next COVID relief package must include targeted relief for SBHCs

- When in person schooling resumes across the country, we must ensure SBHCs are able to provide the full scope of services and meet the increased health needs, including mental health and routine childhood vaccinations.
 - SBHCs are well positioned to implement scaled up COVID testing and vaccination efforts but must receive the financial support to do so.
- If possible, film a virtual site tour of an SBHC in your area that highlights services provided before and during COVID-19. More information on how to film this video can be found at the end of this guide.
- Confirm your meeting with the representative one to two weeks prior to the meeting. Circulate the agenda with all participants.
- The day of the meeting, test your technology to ensure that all cameras and microphones are working. Ask your legislator or staff member if they are willing to be photographed and take a screenshot to share on social media or in newsletters.
- Within one week, email the legislator and their staff with a thank you note, reminding them of the topics discussed and your specific policy asks. If you have filmed a site visit, link the site visit and any other documents or other supporting resources in your email.

Tips for the Meeting

- Research your legislators. Have you met with them before? Are they familiar with SBHCs? Do they hold committee membership on any key committees? Have they co-sponsored legislation supportive of SBHCs?
- Practice your talking points. Outline your key messages about SBHCs and key asks of the legislator.
- Integrate stories of real students and families and how the SBHC has impacted their lives.
- Avoid jargon your legislator may not be familiar with (such as acronyms--instead of SBHCs, refer to them by their full name). Congressional staff may not be familiar with the basics of SBHCs, so begin with the landscape of SBHCs and how they work in your area.
- Keep the conversation local, sharing data and stories from your state/region.

Virtual Site Tours

If possible, consider filming a short (no longer than 5 minute-long) video “site tour” to send to your representatives after your meeting. These site tours will illustrate what SBHCs do and how they are serving communities.

Tips:

- This can be filmed on a phone, but please make sure to film horizontally rather than vertically.
- Do not film minors without written parent/guardian consent. We highly suggest filming the site tour either empty or when only site staff are present.
- While filming the tour, highlight areas that are especially important during COVID, including any outdoor facilities, areas that practitioners are conducting telehealth appointments, etc.

- We suggest that one person films the tour while another guides the tour and provides narration to the video.
- Light editing can be used to ensure that the tour is short and concise - there are many free video editing programs online or already installed on your PC.
- Once completed, you can upload your video onto a secure web platform. We encourage you to make the video private and require a password to view the video, unless you want to use the tour for your website or social media.

Examples of virtual site tours:

- [Methodist Healthcare Ministries' School Based Health Center Virtual Tour](#) (South Texas)
- [Newport School Based Health Center Tour](#) (Lincoln, Nebraska)