

HOW DO SCHOOLS SUPPORT STUDENT HEALTH?

Comprehensive school health and wellness services are powerful tools for achieving health equity among children and adolescents, particularly those who unjustly experience disparities in outcomes because of their race, ethnicity, or family income. The goal is to create and uphold intersecting systems of care that support children in being healthy, feeling safe, and effectively engaging with school. Funding for these services can come from various community health and education funding sources, including Medicaid reimbursement.

Schools can support student health through several models: school health services and school-based health care. The descriptions below provide a broad overview of these two models. In practice, many schools implement both models or variations of one or both, depending on resources available within the school and community, student needs, and other stakeholder input.

WHAT ARE SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES?

School health services include, but are not limited to, school nursing, school counseling, school psychology, and school social work services that support student health. The usual governing entity of school health services is the local education agency. The legal authority governing health data and privacy is the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

WHAT IS SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CARE?

School-based health care is provided through school and community health organization partnerships and collaboration with school administration and health services staff. This care includes but is not limited to primary care, mental health, oral health, and vision services. This care complements, not replaces or duplicates, existing school health services. The usual governing entity of school-based health care is a community healthcare organization. The legal authority governing health data and privacy is the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

School-based health centers (SBHCs) offer the most comprehensive type of school-based health care. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Community Preventive Services Task Force recommends school-based health centers (SBHCs) as an evidence-based model that improves educational and health outcomes. SBHCs provide the nation's vulnerable children and youth access to primary care, behavioral health, oral health, and vision care where they spend most of their time – at school. Working at the intersection of health and education, SBHCs collaborate with school districts, principals, teachers, school staff, families, and students. The collaboration, care coordination, and youth engagement results in improved outcomes and health literacy for students, school staff, and the community. The collaboration also contributes to positive education outcomes, including reduced absenteeism, decreased disciplinary actions and suspensions, and improved graduation rates. SBHCs advocate for the needs of low-income children, youth, and families, provide them with a safe haven and serve as a protective factor that reduces poor health and education outcomes. Most SBHCs operate with an external community medical sponsoring agency in partnership with the Local Education Agency.

	SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES	SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CARE
COMMON TYPES OF SERVICES	School nursing, school counseling, school psychology, school social work services	Primary care assessment, diagnosis, and treatment; mental and behavioral health assessment, diagnosis, and treatment; oral health preventive and restorative services; vision care services
ELIGIBLE FOR MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENT	Yes, but states may be required to submit a state plan amendment	Yes
MEDICAID PROVIDERS MUST MEET FEDERAL AND STATE REQUIREMENTS	Yes	Yes
PROVIDE SERVICES COVERED UNDER THE EARLY AND PERIODIC SCREENING, DIAGNOSTIC, AND TREATMENT (EPSDT) MEDICAID BENEFIT	Yes, in some areas	Yes
SERVICES PROVIDED IN-PERSON, VIA TELEHEALTH OR BOTH	Yes	Yes
SERVICES LEGALLY REQUIRED TO BE PROVIDED BY SCHOOLS	Yes, if required under a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	No
PARENTAL CONSENT REQUIRED FOR SERVICES	Yes	Yes, unless state laws allow otherwise
GOVERNING ENTITY	Local Education Agency	Community Healthcare Organizations (e.g., hospitals, public health agencies, FQHCs, non-profits)
LEGAL AUTHORITY GOVERNING HEALTH DATA AND PRIVACY	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)