

School-Based Health Center Frequently Asked Questions

What is a School-Based Health Center (SBHC)?

A school-based health center (SBHC) is a healthcare center located within the school or on school grounds. Students have access to medical and behavioral health services at the SBHC; which provides support and care to students who have an illness, injury, or need for mental and emotional support. SBHCs offer many of the same services found at a doctor's or behavioral health specialist's office.

Why are SBHCs important?

Children and adolescents spend much of their time at school. The close location of SBHCs reduces the amount of time students are away from school, and reduces the amount of time that parents/legal guardians are away from work. SBHCs also provide students who have limited transportation, the opportunity to receive services which may not be accessible to them. SBHCs allow all students the ability to receive the medical and behavioral health care they need to support healthy lifestyles, and the ability to improve school and social interactions.

What services are provided at a SBHC?

Services provided may include:

- Physical exams and checkups, including sports physicals
- Treatment for minor injuries and illnesses
- Vaccines/shots
- Help for students with chronic conditions such as asthma, allergies, and diabetes
- Counseling services for students who show signs of stress, depression, sadness, grief, and more
- Routine lab tests
- Prescriptions and medications
- Health and wellness education
- Referrals to outside providers and agencies when needed
- Assist families in getting medical insurance

Who works at a SBHC?

Qualified, Licensed Health Care Professionals staff the centers. SBHC staff typically includes a Primary Care Provider (Nurse Practitioner, Medical Doctor, or Physician Assistant), Medical Director, Registered Nurse, Behavioral Health Provider (Counselor/Social Worker), Director/Coordinator, and an Office Assistant.

Can I meet the SBHC staff?

Yes, the SBHC staff welcomes the opportunity to meet parents and legal guardians. Call the SBHC to speak with the center's Director to set up an appointment. To find contact information for your local SBHC, visit PartnersForFamilyHealth.org/SBHC. SBHC staff often participate in school events at which parents and guardians are present, such as the school's open house, orientations, and roundups.

Why do parents like SBHCs?

Parents/legal guardians appreciate SBHCs because:

- SBHCs help their children stay healthy and in school.
- Parents/legal guardians do not have to miss work or change their daily routines to take their children to appointments. They can remain at work or home.
- SBHC providers work with the parent/legal guardian and child to resolve health issues and promote strong family communication.

Does the child need their parent/legal guardian's permission to receive services at the SBHC?

Yes, SBHC services are available to all students who have a signed consent form on file.

The consent form gives the SBHC permission to provide medical and/or behavioral health services to the child without contacting the parent/legal guardian each time the child visits the SBHC. In emergencies, the SBHC is required by law to provide treatment to a student and every attempt is made to contact the parent/legal guardian. SBHC providers work with the parent/legal guardian and child to resolve health issues and promote strong family communication.

Does the parent/legal guardian need to be present for the child to receive services?

No, the signed consent form allows the SBHC to provide services. Parents/legal guardians are welcome to be present during visits.

Will I need to pay for my child to receive services at the SBHC?

No, there are no out-of-pocket costs (co-payments) for a child who receives services at the SBHC. SBHCs bill Medicaid and private insurance companies for the services provided to your child to help cover the cost of operating the SBHC. Students with and without insurance receive the same level of care. Students who are uninsured will receive information on how to apply for insurance.

How are SBHCs funded?

SBHCs get their funding from many different sources, including federal and state dollars; private grants and donations; insurance billing; and non-monetary support. Schools generally support the SBHC by providing physical space, utilities, and custodial services.

Do SBHCs work with school nurses and school counselors?

Yes, SBHCs do not replace or compete with school nurses or counselors. Their roles and the types of services provided by SBHC medical and behavioral health staff are different. School staff and SBHC staff are both vitally important to provide greater health care for your child.