



SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS IN EDUCATION REFORM

Why We Need School-Based Health Care

Healthy students learn best. Yet too many school children fight the harmful effects of poor nutrition, risky behaviors, violence, tobacco and substance use and chronic diseases – all of which affect learning performance and are preventable if identified and treated early.

School-based health centers (SBHCs) are important components of the health care safety net for our children. SBHCs address physical, emotional, and behavioral health issues and foster learning readiness and academic achievement. There are almost 2,000 school-based health centers in 44 states and the District of Columbia, serving approximately 1.7 million children and adolescents.

SBHC Benefits to Schools and Education Systems

SBHC Service or Program for Students	Benefit to School/Educational System
Identify students at risk for health and behavioral problems	To reduce obstacles to the learning process.
Immunize students	To ensure the school meets governmental requirements, to minimize school-wide outbreaks, and to reduce absenteeism.
Administer medication to students with chronic illness	To reduce absences, as well as disciplinary action for students with behavioral health problems.
Provide mental health services	To help students concentrate in school and maintain healthy relationships with peers, teachers, and family.
Provide preventive health services	To improve student health and prevent or minimize future health and mental health problems.
Provide on-site management of acute health conditions	To improve attendance and student health.
Refer students to services not provided at the SBHC	To address the full spectrum of health issues that can function as barriers to learning and to case manage students receiving services elsewhere.

How to Support SBHCs in Education Reform

Increase Support for Community Schools

- Community schools help children and youth achieve academically; SBHCs are an integral component for many community school programs. Community schools successfully provide a wide range of supports to children and their families, taking advantage of the physical resources of the school building to provide access to academic enrichment activities, youth development programs, adult education, social services, and health care.
- The DIPLOMA Act would establish new funding for Community Schools to leverage existing resources and more effectively engage communities in providing high quality education opportunities for students. Research demonstrates the linkages between nutrition, health and student achievement. This bill responds to the common-sense developments to address the barriers students face that prevent them from achieving academically.

Suggestions for Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Reauthorization:

As discussions continue about the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), members should consider the education of the whole child, and the best ways to enhance student achievement. It is just common sense that healthy students learn better. NASBHC offers these ideas for the ESEA reauthorization:

- Include SBHCs as eligible entities for grants and other funding under Title I of the Social Security Act, allowing SBHCs to provide services such as counseling, care for chronic illnesses and immunizations to vulnerable populations of students.
- Explicitly define and authorize community schools as a strategy under Title I and broaden their focus beyond health, social, and nutrition to include other supports and opportunities (e.g., after-school enrichment, college preparation, and mentoring).
- Give local communities control on appropriate services to promote reproductive health. We urge Congress to strike Sec. 9536(4) of ESEA which prohibits the use of funds “to operate a program of contraceptive distribution in schools.” School-based health centers have had incredible success in improving the health and well-being of students and reducing teen pregnancies through education, counseling, and access to care. They provide a comprehensive range of health services to help students reduce risky behaviors. Local communities are in the best position to determine the composition of those services to meet their unique needs.
- Authorize funds to support community school coordinators to leverage and integrate robust community resources and better support students.
- Broaden the definition of Supplemental Education Services (SES) to include comprehensive supports for students and their families, for extended learning opportunity, and for more intensive parent and community engagement.