

School-Based Health Centers *On the Front Line for Mental Health*

Today, over 1700 school-based health centers (SBHCs) deliver **primary preventive and early intervention services** to more than a million children of all grade levels in urban, rural and suburban schools across 45 states.

For most SBHCs, the interdisciplinary team includes mental health professionals: whether masters-prepared clinical social worker, psychologist, psychiatrist, or substance abuse counselor. In 81% of programs with a mental health provider, the predominant provider is a licensed counselor, social worker, or therapist. 10% have a psychiatrist on site.

In ten years, the percentage of school-based health centers with mental health staff went from 30 to over 65%. It is the **fastest growing component** of school-based health care.

In studies of school-based health center service utilization, mental health counseling is repeatedly identified as the **leading reason for visits** by students.

One study found that adolescents with access to SBHCs were more than **10 times more likely** to make a mental health or substance abuse visit.

A national survey of 1335 school-based health centers found the following **mental health and counseling services**, where mental health professionals are included as center staff:

▪ Crisis intervention	91%
▪ Mental Health Diagnosis	91%
▪ Psychosocial Assessment	91%
▪ Grief and Loss Therapy	91%
▪ Conflict Resolution/Mediation	87%
▪ Substance Use Counseling	77%
▪ Case management	73%
▪ Long Term Therapy	62%

Several studies have shown that the **barriers experienced in traditional mental health settings** – stigma, non-compliance, inadequate access – **are overcome in school-based settings** and that the users are more likely to be at higher risk for psychosocial problems.

Another study found that students served by health centers had **fewer discipline problems**, course failures, and school absences.

A National Assembly survey of SBHC providers in 2004/2005 found that **expansion of mental health services was the first priority** for any expansion of program funding.

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