

## KEEPING STUDENTS HEALTHY AND LEARNING *SBHCs and EDUCATION*

### Why We Need School-Based Health Care

More than 1900 School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) across the country provide access to high quality, comprehensive medical care, mental health services, preventive care, social services, and youth development to nearly 2 million students in 47 states and territories. These services are provided without concern for students' ability to pay in a location that meets children and adolescents where they are: at school. Multiple peer-reviewed studies have shown SBHCs to be a cost-effective investment in the health of young people – reducing the utilization of emergency rooms, improving health outcomes, and correlating with school attendance and graduation.

### SBHCs Benefit to Students and Education Systems

| SBHC Benefits to Student Health                              | SBHC Benefits to Student Educational Success                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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. |

## SBHCs Keep Students Healthy and Learning

Health problems such as substance abuse, poor nutrition, bullying, and chronic disease regularly interfere with students' ability to learn. Improving students' health is integral to education reform.

- High school SBHC users in one 2000 study had a 50 percent decrease in absenteeism and 25 percent decrease in tardiness two months after receiving school-based mental health and counseling.
- A study of SBHC users in Seattle found that those who use the clinic for medical purposes had a significant increase in attendance over nonusers.
- A 2007 study found that SBHC users for mental health purposes increased their Grade Point Averages over time compared to nonusers.
- African-American male SBHC users were three times more likely to stay in school than their peers who did not use the SBHC.
- Students, teachers, and parents who have a SBHC rated academic expectations, school engagement, and safety and respect significantly higher than in schools without a SBHC.
- SBHCs in the Bronx, NY reduced hospitalization and increased school attendance among school children with asthma.
- A study in New York observed that students not enrolled in a SBHC lost three times as much seat time as students enrolled in a SBHC.

## Cutbacks Threaten a Cost-Effective Investment in Students

Many SBHCs are at risk of cutting services or even closing due to the current economic downturn, insufficient reimbursement for patient services, and slashed local funding. Policymakers can support student achievement by making sure that students are healthy and ready to learn.

Poor academic outcomes and high dropout rates are major concerns of educators, policy makers, and parents alike – and poor health severely limits a child's motivation and ability to learn. Recent research confirms that health disparities affect educational achievement. Improving students' health is integral to education reform.

## School-based Health Centers: How Policymakers Can Help

### Support federal funding for community schools

Community schools provide academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement, and bring together many partners to offer a range of support and opportunities for children, youth, families, and communities. NASBHC supports the Developing Innovative Partnerships and Learning Opportunities that Motivate Achievement Act (The DIPLOMA Act; S.3595/H.R. 6229 during the previous Congress), which would significantly expand the number of full-service community schools.

### Allow Title I funding to support health care in schools

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides federal funding for schools and school districts with a high percentage of students from low-income families. Title I funds are used to provide additional academic support and learning opportunities to help low-achieving students meet state standards in core academic subjects. Schools and school districts should be allowed to use those funds for other support services, especially the provision of health care in schools. Poor health is a barrier to academic achievement, and school districts should be allowed to provide the care needed to keep students in class and ready to learn.