



WASHINGTON

SCHOOL-BASED
HEALTH ALLIANCE

Advancing Health Care in Schools

**Guidance for
Washington School-Based Health Centers
for 2020-2021 School Reopening**

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by the

Washington School-Based Health Alliance

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Introduction

With school closures due to COVID-19, Washington children and adolescents missed over three months of in-person school in the spring of 2020. For many who rely on school-based health centers (SBHCs), and with limited access to health care in the community during the pandemic, this means months of untreated chronic illness, missed preventive care visits and required vaccinations, and compounded unmet mental health needs. Many students and staff will return to school with the added stress of illness and loss of loved ones due to COVID-19, anxiety due to isolation and navigating distance learning, the impacts of economic instability within their families, and heightened racial trauma. We also know that COVID-19 will continue to be a threat in many communities when schools re-open. School-based health centers and services will play a critical, frontline role in addressing the concerns and needs of school communities as we all do our part to control further spread of the virus.

When schools reopen, SBHCs can provide preventive and routine health care that was deferred due to COVID-19, and they will continue to provide other critical physical, behavioral health, and other healthcare services such as dental care for Washington's most vulnerable youth. Healthcare providers and schools/districts must develop and maintain a collaborative effort—now more than ever—to address student and school community needs.

This guidance document was created to support and foster additional collaboration between existing SBHCs and the school communities they serve, and to encourage school districts and healthcare providers to consider new collaborations to address student needs.

In addition to planning for the safe re-entry of students, we urge you to prioritize racial equity and the social-emotional well-being of students through your SBHCs and in the support you provide to school district partners. A heightened awareness of and attention to racism, trauma and mental health will be critical, as well as diligence to measures to prevent discrimination and stigmatization surrounding COVID-19. Additional emphasis should be given to crisis response and maintaining fair discipline practices as students return to school after months of disruption in their daily routines.

About this SBHC Guidance

This resource was developed to support coordination between Washington school-based health centers (SBHCs) and their school district partners as schools reopen during the COVID-19 pandemic. The goals of this guidance are to:

- *encourage a unified statewide approach for coordination between SBHCs and school districts for reopening;*
- *help SBHCs and schools leverage resources to address the needs of students;*
- *help to clarify boundaries/responsibilities between schools and SBHCs for student care as schools reopen.*

This document is intended to be used as a template for guiding local discussions and will be updated periodically to remain current. Local discussions will be informed by guidance from the [Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction \(OSPI\)](#), the Washington State Department of Health (DOH), and local health jurisdictions; school district and school reopening planning; and SBHC sponsoring agencies. Given variation in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across Washington as well as the unique local response, **all decisions should be made in close collaboration with local school districts and local and state public health authorities.**

Please do not hesitate to reach out with additional questions or needs as you collaborate in reopening your school-based health centers. Thank you for all you do to support our students in Washington.

*Sandy Lennon, Executive Director
Washington School-Based Health Alliance
Email: slennon@wasbha.org*

About the Washington School-Based Health Alliance

The Washington School-Based Health Alliance (WA SBHA) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization committed to advancing health care access in schools and helping ensure the health and academic success of children and youth statewide.

Website: <https://wasbha.org>
Email: info@wasbha.org / slennon@wasbha.org

The WA SBHA is a state affiliate of the national [School-Based Health Alliance](#).

Acknowledgements

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Context of School Reopening in Washington

On June 11, 2020, Washington's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction released the [OSPI Reopening Washington Schools 2020 District Planning Guide](#). *This guidance will likely be updated in the coming months. Please check back regularly for the latest version.*

OSPI's guidance, which includes health and safety requirements from the Department of Health, provides a broad framework within which local school districts and schools will plan for reopening with additional guidance from their local health jurisdictions.

OSPI's guidance provides important context for SBHC guidance included in this document:

- There is a presumption of a fall opening.
- The priority is to serve students with as much face-to-face time as possible, consistent with health and safety needs.
- Alternative models, if schools cannot meet physical distancing requirements and are limited in face-to-face instruction, fall within these concepts:
 - Split or rotating schedules with continuous remote learning
 - Phased-in opening with continuous remote learning
 - Continuous (remote) Learning 2.0

School districts will need to plan for:

- Rapid transitions between models
- A flexible school calendar in case of lost instructional time

OSPI's guidance lays out commitments and principles for our education system in the 2020-2021 school year, some worth highlighting here as they are also key to our work in school-based health care:

- Dismantle systemic racism and support students furthest from educational justice, including:
 - students of color
 - students with disabilities
 - students who are English learners
 - students who are migratory
 - students experiencing homelessness
 - students in foster care
 - students experiencing intergenerational poverty
 - students who identify as LGBTQ+
- Seek and utilize student and family voice when planning for fall, as much has changed.
- Seize the opportunity to make long-desired changes or to make permanent best practices learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Culturally-responsive, trauma-informed, and anti-racist practices are foundational. Plan for staff training and support in these practices.
- Support staff in attending to self-care.

Considerations for SBHCs in Reopening Planning

Communication with local health jurisdiction

- Identify contacts and open lines of communication with your local health jurisdiction. Know whom to contact with questions about local school reopening guidance, phase of county reopening, and/or roles in contact tracing. *Note: The role and capacity of local health jurisdictions may vary from region to region.*

SBHC services during reopening

- Determine with the SBHC’s sponsoring agency:
 - What in-person and telehealth services the SBHC will provide during school reopening.
 - What role the SBHC will play in COVID-19 screening, testing and referrals.

To help clarify COVID-19 *screening* and *testing* in the context of the school:

- **Screening:** There may be COVID-19 *screening upon arrival* (of any person entering the school or the SBHC) and *screening of symptomatic students or staff* while they are on campus. Screening may involve a set of questions and options for temperature checking.
- **Testing:** Symptomatic persons may be *tested* for COVID-19. Testing may happen at school, at a testing site in the community, or at home if a take-home test kit becomes available.
- *All COVID-19 screening and testing protocols within the context of schools will be determined with guidance from OSPI, our state and local public health agencies, and school district planning. Any COVID-19 screening and testing by SBHC staff will be determined by the SBHC sponsoring agency in coordination with the school district.*

ROLES	School	SBHC
Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening upon arrival at school for all entering the building • Screening of symptomatic students and staff while on campus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening upon arrival at SBHC for non-sick visits • <i>Optional:</i> Screening of symptomatic students and staff while on campus
Testing	<i>Optional:</i> Testing symptomatic students and staff on campus, referring to community testing site, or sending home take-home test kits	<i>Optional:</i> Testing symptomatic students and staff on campus, referring to community testing site, or sending home take-home test kits

- Be clear and consistent in all communications with the district, school and families about the availability of SBHC services and SBHC roles in COVID-19 screening, testing and referral.

Coordination and Collaboration with School District and School

- Ask the district to include the SBHC in the district's:
 - Asset mapping to identify resources to serve student/family needs
 - Reopening stakeholder group
- With the district and school, clarify the health and safety roles of the district, school and SBHC in light of COVID-19 impacts and school reopening guidelines:
 - Clarify schoolwide protocols for COVID-19 screening upon arrival, as well as screening protocols and physical facilities to be used for symptomatic students and staff during the school day.
 - Clarify the roles in COVID-19 screening and testing between the school nurse, health aides, other school staff, SBHC, and healthcare providers in the community. Consider with the school a decision tree about screening and testing symptomatic students or staff during the school day. Even if the SBHC does not screen or test symptomatic students or staff, it will be important that SBHC staff know where to direct them.
 - Consider any new population-based role for SBHC staff, for example:
 - Orientation and ongoing training of students, families, staff on COVID-19 health and safety protocols
 - Student education around social-emotional health
 - School staff training:
 - Staff self-care & resiliency
 - Trauma-informed practices
 - Review the timeframe for the school year and SBHC operations given the possibility of COVID-19-related school closures and extended school year. An attitude of flexibility will be key, as schools may need to quickly change instructional models or close the school short- or long-term due to COVID-19 concerns.
 - Talk with school administration and staff about students' class schedules and scheduling SBHC appointments so there is minimal impact to instructional time. Students have experienced significant disruption to their learning in 2020 as well as having increased health needs, so consider with the school how best to balance these needs during the school day.
 - Review expected SBHC services, staffing and operational hours, especially to address increased or different needs this year. For example:

- Will the SBHC provide services outside of the typical school year or school day, e.g. before school opens (summer 2020), or before or after school? If so, what needs to be considered regarding SBHC staff's access to the building and services provided by the school (custodial, power, security, etc.)?
 - Given SBHC facilities, funding and district policy, will the SBHC broaden the population they serve (e.g. students' family members, school staff, or others) to meet community need?
- Consider the impacts of all of the above and any needed changes to the lease, memorandum of understanding (MOU), and/or other agreements between the district and SBHC.
- Communicate early and often with school administrators and the school nurse.
 - If the SBHC is co-located with the school nurse, coordinate:
 - clear separation of spaces for screening/testing of symptomatic students and for students visiting the nurse or SBHC for other care
 - traffic flow to comply with physical distancing requirements
 - cleaning and disinfecting protocols and responsibilities for shared spaces
 - Clarify whether additional school health services will be provided by the school during school reopening, and the schedules of health services staff, especially in schools without a full-time school nurse.
 - Coordinate closely with the school nurse to support vaccine compliance and other back-to-school care, and to coordinate student referrals and care throughout the year.
 - In alignment with all relevant guidance, coordinate consistent messaging for staff, students and families around:
 - Enhanced infection control measures and the safety of returning to school and accessing SBHC services.
 - The school's response and communication plan if a student or staff develops signs or tests positive for COVID-19.

Student and Family Outreach, Enrollment and Communication

- Communicate proactively with district and school staff about what the SBHC can offer, how SBHC staff can help in school reopening planning and coordination, and how SBHC materials can be included in district and school communication to families.
- Layer outreach for families, using all possible in-person and electronic means of communication:
 - Learn how the school is handling back-to-school packets this year and how you can include SBHC enrollment information.

- Know the school’s calendar, student schedules and modalities for school reopening orientations and events.
- Consider outreach options if school reopens with limited face-to-face orientations and instruction, including outreach through school and SBHC social media, school newsletters, PTSA communications, food distribution sites, community-based organizations, etc.
- Ensure SBHC enrollment forms and communications are available in the languages spoken by students and families at the school, to the greatest extent possible. Connect with school staff and community-based organizations about reaching students’ families with SBHC materials in the language they understand best.
- OSPI guidance indicates that schools are to prioritize face-to-face service for students most impacted by the loss of in-person services. Find out how your school will be doing this and consider how the SBHC might leverage school efforts to reach these same students and their families.
- Strengthen relationships and communication with:
 - School nurses, counselors, social workers, psychologists, family support workers, instructional assistants for English learners and special education students, liaisons for students experiencing homelessness, and athletic coaches
 - Community-based organizations serving students inside and outside of the school to ensure coordination and leverage of resources
 - Student groups such as student health councils, culturally-specific student unions, and GSAs
- Ensure your SBHC has a means of receiving consents electronically, for example:
 - Full enrollment consent
 - Student consent for confidential services
 - Vaccination consent
- For new and established clients, ensure current contact information for SBHC-enrolled students, including students’ direct contact information if they are receiving confidential services, to facilitate outreach and continuity of care in the event of hybrid instructional models or school closures.

Addressing Student Needs

- Learn what your district and school are doing to advance racial equity and consider how the SBHC might contribute and improve its own practices:
 - Are there existing or new racial equity efforts in which SBHC staff can participate to listen, learn, outreach, and contribute?

- Can the SBHC support school staff around culturally-responsive and trauma-informed practices?
- Is the SBHC collecting and disaggregating client data based on race? Consider trends in SBHC use in relation to the population of the school. Consider how the SBHC might improve outreach, trust and meaningful access to SBHC services among students of color, recognizing the individual and cultural diversity among them.
- Understand school discipline policies and any changes being implemented. Discuss with the district and school how the SBHC can support students and school staff around behavioral health, especially as schools reopen this year. OSPI guidance highlights for our educators that:
 - “Inappropriate behavior is not always defiance—it is important communication. Following safety requirements will be challenging for many students. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), trauma, mental health, and fear can all drive behavioral concerns.”
- Identify how the SBHC will stay informed of student needs as school re-opens and throughout the year.
 - OSPI guidance indicates universal screening for social-emotional, academic, and family needs. Coordinate with the school how students will be referred for SBHC services if needs are flagged in universal screening.
 - Leverage an existing student health council or SBHC advisory committee if one exists, or consider creating one, to identify student health needs. Consider how to elevate caregivers’ voices, especially for younger students.
 - Enhance outreach to and surveys of students, caregivers, and school staff to keep current on changing needs throughout the year.
- Consider enhanced screenings within the SBHC for:
 - Anxiety and depression
 - Substance use
 - Social determinants of health (e.g. economic, food, and housing insecurity)
 - Racial trauma
- Share with the school how screenings are integrated into SBHC visits and consider how SBHC trend data might help the school plan for population-level interventions.
- Consider how the SBHC will address areas of new, deferred, and increased student needs:
 - COVID-19 concerns
 - Well-child care, sports physicals & vaccinations
 - Sexual and reproductive health care
 - Oral health screenings and care

- Behavioral health care:
 - Connect with the district or school’s team for [multi-tiered systems of support \(MTSS\)](#) to ensure the SBHC is understood as a resource for students’ behavioral health needs:
 - Enhanced population-based support of all students at Level 1
 - Referrals to SBHC for brief or more intensive interventions at Levels 2 & 3
 - Review plans for students in crisis or who are suicidal.
 - Identify SBHC staff needs and resources available for professional development around increased behavioral health needs, culturally-responsive and trauma-informed care, and racial trauma.
- If you are in a district or county where multiple healthcare sponsors are operating SBHCs, work to coordinate for consistency in SBHC services and operations.

Operations and Physical Space

- Consider district and school planning around, for example:
 - COVID-19 mitigation strategies for school staff, students and others in the building. Prepare SBHC staff to abide by, at a minimum, these schoolwide strategies.
 - Access to the school building by families and visitors. Determine how this will affect access to the SBHC and pick-up of students by caregivers.
 - The response and communication plan in the event of a positive case of COVID-19 in the school. Determine how this might affect the SBHC’s ability to stay open in its physical space.
- Within the school context and SBHC facility, consider how the SBHC sponsoring agency’s policies and protocols will be adapted in the following areas:
 - Physical distancing and traffic flow:
 - How many students can access and wait in the SBHC at a time and still comply with physical distancing requirements? How might this affect scheduling and waiting for appointments?
 - Is there a way to direct entry and exit traffic to minimize contact between students in the SBHC?
 - Signage at entry about access, screening upon arrival, physical distancing, hygiene
 - Ventilation
 - Infection control and cleaning, especially in shared spaces
 - Personal protective equipment (PPE):

- [Department of Labor & Industries](#) safety requirements for SBHC staff
 - PPE requirements for students while in the clinic
 - Procurement of adequate PPE supplies
 - Staff education about use and conservation of PPE
- Equipment cleaning, re-use or disposal
- Consider how to enroll/consent, schedule appointments, and use hybrid in-person and telehealth care models if schools are limited in face-to-face instruction and/or in the event of students' quarantine or isolation due to COVID-19.
- Telehealth:
 - Evaluate the role of telehealth in your program. Explore maximal use of telehealth, for all types of visits when feasible.
 - Consider how the digital divide contributes to health and educational inequities through disparities in connectivity, access to devices, and digital literacy. Consider how the SBHC can minimize disparities in students' access to health services this year through outreach, enrollment and scheduling strategies.
 - Capitalize on telehealth to engage families in student appointments.
- Anticipate absences among SBHC staff due to COVID-19 illness or concerns and the possibility of needing to quarantine the SBHC team. Consider staff leave policies and coverage in the event of absences.
- Ensure students and families know how to reach SBHC staff in the event of sudden school and/or SBHC closures. Ensure SBHC contact information is current wherever it is posted and that phone lines and emails are forwarded as needed to reach SBHC staff.
- Have ready to send home with students/families:
 - Fact sheet re SBHC services and operations during reopening (Appendix B)
 - COVID-19 fact sheet
 - In-home COVID-19 test kits (if SBHC performing a testing role and kits available)
- If the SBHC is screening or testing symptomatic students or staff, clarify the protocols and dedicated space to be used for this and what mitigation strategies will be used to keep the SBHC safe and available for other health services.

Appendix A

Summary Checklist of Considerations in SBHC-School District Coordination for 2020-2021 School Year

✓	Task
	Communication with Local Health Jurisdiction
	Identify contacts and establish communication with local health jurisdiction re school reopening.
	SBHC Services during Reopening
	Identify SBHC services during reopening, including whether SBHC will screen / test those with symptoms for COVID-19. Ensure consistent communication about SBHC services during reopening.
	Coordination and Collaboration with School District and School
	Ask district to be included in district's asset mapping and reopening stakeholder group.
	Clarify health and safety protocols, physical facilities, and roles vis-à-vis COVID-19 within the school.
	Consider with the school a decision tree about screening and testing of symptomatic persons on campus.
	Consider any new population-based role for SBHC, e.g. schoolwide education/training of students or staff.
	Review timeframe for the school year and SBHC operations given possibility of school closures and extended school year.
	Consider how to minimize disruptions to instructional time for SBHC appointments.
	Review expected SBHC services, staffing and operational hours to address new and increased needs this year. Consider SBHC operations outside of typical school year or hours, any new populations served, and impacts on SBHC staff's access to school building and services.
	Consider any needed changes to lease, MOU or other agreements between district and SBHC.
	Communicate early and often with school administrators and school nurse, e.g. re: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coordination in physical space if SBHC and school nurse are co-located • school health services staffing and schedules this year • vaccine compliance, student referrals, and care coordination
	Coordinate messaging around safety of returning to school and of accessing SBHC services.
	Clarify school's response and communication plan in the event of a COVID-19 case in the school.
	Student and Family Outreach, Enrollment, Communication
	Communicate proactively with district and school staff re what SBHC can offer during school reopening and how SBHC can be included in communication to families.
	Layer outreach for families. Learn school calendar and modalities for back-to-school orientations, events, and back-to-school packets this year. Consider outreach options if school limited in face-to-face orientations or instruction.
	Ensure translation of SBHC materials into languages spoken by students' families to extent possible and outreach to families in the languages they understand best.
	Leverage school efforts to reach students and families most impacted by loss of in-person services.
	Strengthen communication with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school nurse, counselors, social worker, psychologist, family support workers, etc. • community-based organizations serving students in and outside of school • students groups including student health councils, student unions, GSAs
	Ensure SBHC ability to receive electronic consents for care.
	Ensure current contact information for new and established SBHC clients to ensure continuity of care in the case of hybrid instructional models or if school needs to close.
	Addressing Student Needs
	Leverage and contribute to district and school efforts to advance racial justice. Disaggregate SBHC data based on race and work to improve meaningful access to SBHC services among students of color.

	Understand school discipline practices and consider with school how SBHC can support students & school staff in behavioral health especially this year.
	Identify how SBHC will learn and stay informed of student health needs, e.g. through universal screening, student health council, SBHC advisory committee, enhanced outreach and/or surveys.
	Enhance SBHC screenings for anxiety and depression, substance use, social determinants of health and racial trauma. Consider how trend data might inform school's population-based strategies.
	Assess SBHC readiness to address new, deferred or increased student health needs. Re behavioral health: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with district/school MTSS team • Review plans for students in crisis or who are suicidal • Provide SBHC professional development and staff support re culturally-responsive and trauma-informed practices and racial trauma
	If in a district or county with multiple SBHC sponsoring agencies, coordinate for consistency
Operations and Physical Space	
	Consider impacts on SBHC access and operations of district/school planning around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 mitigation strategies • Access to building by families and visitors • School's response and communication plan
	Consider how sponsoring agency's policies / protocols will be adapted to the school context and SBHC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical distancing and traffic flow • Signage at entry • Ventilation • Infection control and cleaning • PPE • Equipment cleaning, re-use or disposal
	Consider how to enroll/consent, schedule appts and use hybrid models of care if school limited in face-to-face instruction.
	Telehealth: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate role of telehealth esp. in the event of hybrid models of instruction or school closure. • Consider how to enroll and serve students to minimize inequities in access to telehealth. • Capitalize on telehealth to engage families in student appointments.
	Anticipate staff absences due to COVID-19. Review staff leave policies & substitute staffing.
	Ensure students and families know how to reach SBHC in event of sudden school or SBHC closure. Keep posted contact info current, and ensure phone and email forwarding as needed.
	Have ready to send home with students/families: 1) fact sheet re SBHC services and operations during reopening, 2) fact sheet re COVID-19, 3) in-home COVID-19 test kit if available and within SBHC role
	If screening and/or testing symptomatic students or staff for COVID-19, clarify physical space and protocols for this as well as mitigation strategies to keep SBHC open and safe for other services.

Appendix B SBHC Fact Sheet EXAMPLE

The School-Based Health Center is OPEN During School Reopening 2020-2021

The School-Based Health Center welcomes students, their families and school staff back to school! Here are some frequently-asked questions about SBHC services this year in light of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic:

What services will the SBHC be providing in 2020-2021, and how?

The school-based health center will be providing the following services to the fullest extent possible in person. We are also able to provide many services to students through telehealth if the school is operating with a rotating schedule or online only. Please contact us directly with specific questions about our services.

- preventive well-child care & sports physicals
- immunizations
- chronic care
- acute care
- sexual and reproductive health services
- mental and behavioral health counseling
- substance abuse counseling
- nutritional counseling
- oral health screening and dental care

When are you open?

We will be open starting on [XX] and our days and hours of operation are generally [XX]. Note that SBHC hours this year may depend on the school's model of instruction and any necessary changes throughout the year due to COVID-19. Again, we are able to provide many services to students through telehealth if the school is operating with a rotating schedule or online only. We are staying flexible to serve students and the school community to the fullest extent possible, and we will keep posted hours and contact information current as any changes occur.

Is it safe to visit the SBHC? What can my student expect when they come to the SBHC this year?

The SBHC is following all school district, public health and [sponsoring agency] health and safety requirements and best practices to keep the SBHC as safe as possible for all visits. This includes COVID-19 symptom and exposure screening for everyone who enters the SBHC, physical distancing, face coverings, hygiene practices, and cleaning and disinfecting. Students arriving at the SBHC will follow practices that will largely mirror those of the school. We will guide your student through the SBHC's specific and youth-friendly practices when they arrive for a SBHC visit.

Is the SBHC able to provide services to school staff, students' family members, and/or others this year?

[Yes / No / who can be served / during what hours]

Is the SBHC doing COVID-19 screening and testing of students or others who become ill while at school?

[The SBHC is / is not screening / testing symptomatic students / others at school. Clarify school and SBHC roles in screening and testing of symptomatic persons on campus.]

How do I enroll?

To enroll in the SBHC or for more information, please contact:

[Name]

[SBHC Sponsoring Agency]

[Phone] / [Email]

For online enrollment, you can find our enrollment packet and consent forms here: [link]

Resources / References

WASHINGTON STATE

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

[OSPI Reopening Washington Schools 2020 District Planning Guide](#)

[Behavioral Health Impacts after COVID-19 Shelter-at-Home Orders: What to Expect and Ways to Prepare for the Return to School](#) (by the UW SMART Center, Northwest MHTTC Network, and Seattle Children's)

[Multi-Tiered Systems of Support](#)

Department of Health

[COVID-19 General Information Fact Sheets](#) (in eight languages)

Department of Labor & Industries

[Department of Labor & Industries COVID-19 Workplace Safety and Health Requirements](#)

NATIONAL

Centers For Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)

[Considerations for Schools](#)

[Symptoms of COVID-19](#)

Other

[Kaiser Permanente Thriving Schools Playbook for School Reopening](#)

Please note that clarifications, links, tools and resources may be added to this guidance in the coming months. Please check back for the latest version.