



School Nurses & School-Based Health Centers in Washington State

Working Together for Student Success

	School Nurses	School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs)
Who they serve	School nurses are responsible for the day-to-day oversight and management of the entire student population’s health within their school buildings.	SBHCs provide primary, behavioral health and other healthcare services such as dental care to enrolled students and sometimes students’ families, school staff or other community members.
What they do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess and manage life-threatening, acute and chronic illness • Develop and implement emergency care (ECP) and individualized health (IHP) plans • Perform vision and hearing screening • Ensure immunization compliance • Manage medications for life-threatening allergies and chronic conditions such as asthma and diabetes • Provide communicable disease surveillance • Perform case management • Provide first aid in emergencies • Conduct staff health training • Delegate nursing authority within school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide primary care, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ comprehensive health screenings ○ well-child exams ○ sports physicals ○ vaccinations ○ treatment of injury and chronic and acute illness ○ laboratory services ○ diagnosis ○ prescription & dispensing of medication • Provide behavioral health care, including mental health and substance abuse counseling • Provide dental care
	<p><i>School nurses and SBHCs both:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide health education and promotion • Serve as members of a student’s health team • Refer and coordinate care • Facilitate insurance enrollment • Serve as members of student support teams for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and disability (504 plan) accommodations • Participate in school emergency planning 	

Questions & Answers

Should schools have both a school nurse and SBHC?

Yes! Health promotion, education and care can more effectively be delivered in the school setting when both school nurses and SBHCs are accessible and collaborate for students' health.

How are they funded? When budgets are tight, can both be justified?

Care provided by school nurses and SBHCs are complementary—one does not replace the other—and funding streams are different.

School nurses are primarily paid with state and local education dollars. Some schools also bill for Medicaid-reimbursable school nursing services through the Health Care Authority's School-Based Health Care Services (SBHS) program.

SBHCs may be funded with Medicaid and private insurance billing, local or federal public grants, private grants and donations, and the in-kind contributions of healthcare sponsors and schools.

What happens when they work together? Collaboration between school nurses and SBHCs:

- Advances health equity by improving access to healthcare, particularly for the historically underserved such as students of color and students who are immigrants, refugees, English learners, low-income, rural, un-/under-insured, homeless, LGBTQ+ and/or disabled
- Strengthens school-based health promotion, education and disease prevention
- Connects students to appropriate health care faster and more easily
- Improves continuity and coordination of care
- Improves attendance and increases classroom seat time
- Supports school staff and administrators, allowing them to teach and lead
- Saves education costs by helping students progress toward on-time graduation
- Saves health care costs by reducing emergency room visits and other hospitalizations
- Familiarizes students with health care, supporting the transition from pediatric to adult health care
- **Improves students' health, overall well-being and academic outcomes**

For more information:

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[National Association of School Nurses \(NASN\)](#)

[School-Based Health Alliance \(SBHA\)](#)