

King County School-Based Health Centers

MENTAL HEALTH MODEL OF CARE FRAMEWORK (2019)

Background

School-based health centers (SBHCs) are an investment in the health and academic potential of children and adolescents. Primary care, mental health, and oral health services are provided by medical and mental health providers in an integrated and collaborative manner. SBHCs provide services to meet the needs of the student in an effort to holistically enhance health and learning outcomes. This is accomplished through active collaboration and communication with established school-based support services, families, and community partners.

Focus on health equity

Addressing health holistically from the perspective of eliminating the root causes of health disparities is central to our work as public health practitioners and health care providers. Our work is funded through public dollars and we aim to utilize these investments to advance health equity. Therefore, central to our approach is alignment with the [City of Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative](#) and the [King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan](#). Further, our work benefits from the clear guidance of the statement on equity by the [King County Children Youth Advisory Board](#) below. We see the following as aspirational for our collective work:

- Equity is an ardent journey toward well-being as defined by the affected
- Equity demands sacrifice and redistribution of power and resources in order to break systems of oppression, heal continuing wounds, and realize justice
- To achieve equity and social justice, we must first root out deeply entrenched systems of racism
- Equity proactively builds strong foundations of agency, is vigilant for unintended consequences, and boldly aspires to be restorative
- Equity is disruptive and uncomfortable and not voluntary
- Equity is fundamental to the community we want to build

Vision and mission for King County SBHCs

Vision:

All children and adolescents are healthy and ready to thrive in the classroom and in life

Mission:

- To promote evidence-based, community-informed, high quality, equitable, and culturally-relevant school-based health care to support all students to be healthy and academically engaged
- To accomplish our work through a systematic approach to partnerships and collaborative leadership between schools and school-based health centers
- To achieve measureable results for student health and academic outcomes so that students thrive in school and have a strong start to achieving lifelong success

King County SBHCs Mental Health Standards of Practice

SBHC role in overall school mental health

Schools have an important role to play in supporting positive mental health for the youth in their care. The school district is responsible for the overall school climate to help ensure that social, emotional, and behavioral health needs are met which leads to better learning. The SBHC can be an adjunct to that core role of the school.

SBHCs and the MTSS framework

SBHCs and other school resources for mental health operate within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework for allocating resources in schools which helps enable prevention, early intervention, and monitoring of student mental health. SBHCs provide evidence based mental health services using a measurement-based approach. Within the MTSS framework, SBHCs invest the majority of their effort within Tier 2, while also providing limited supports within Tiers 1 and 3. Within Tier 2, there is a focus on developing students' skill sets to become more high-functioning (e.g. in their problem-solving and self-regulation). Students may move between these tiers and/or may receive multiple services within a tier. School environments and needs can also change quickly and the SBHC staff focus interventions to meet those changing needs. It is also important to acknowledge that the SBHCs will not meet all the mental health needs for every student and referrals are made as needed to other school- or community-based mental health resources.

SBHCs have varying roles in supporting the students and school environment for each of the three tiers. To help describe these roles, below are overarching approaches for each tier:

- School mental health services in Tier 1 are primarily led by the school. The SBHC serves as a resource for these efforts, albeit in a limited capacity. SBHC staff and services are integrated with the school population and student-level interventions to improve the overall impact of health. We recognize and value the varied resources in the school that support student health. By doing what we do both inside and outside of the clinic, we are improving student health.
- For Tier 2, the SBHC model employs a problem-focused, time-limited approach to mental health service provision in the clinic. Key elements include focusing on top problems, setting specific and short-term treatment goals, and using both standardized and individualized assessment tools to monitor progress and direct the course of treatment. The work is accomplished through individual and group therapy, in meetings with families and school-based partners, and is centered on top problems such as social skills, anxiety, depression, relationship issues, and trauma where the severity is mild to moderate. Other focused work includes school staff and family/caregiver coordination, partnerships, and integration with medical care.
- For Tier 3, the SBHC model provides services for initial assessment and referral to community mental health or wraparound services for more intensive and/or higher acuity needs. The model also accommodates supports for students once they return to school following care with other providers. SBHCs may provide ongoing intensive treatment if attempts to refer to community mental health are unsuccessful. Public Health – Seattle & King County School-Based Partnerships staff can collaborate with you to identify possible referral options for students.

The following diagram provides specific examples of our standard mental health practices organized within the MTSS framework

Mental Health Services in School-Based Health Centers in King County:

Describing mental health practices through the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Framework
 School-based health center services at

Tiers 2 & 3 also provide:

- *Integrated mental health care in the clinic:* Use of case management strategies, sharing and prioritization of strategies and goals, including those for medication and treatment.
- *Family engagement:* Outreach to family about availability of school-based health center services and community mental health services for students with demonstrated need.
- *Prioritized population-based consultation and case review:* Ongoing, timely consultation with psychiatrists/psychologists at Seattle Children’s Hospital and sponsor-based resources.
- *School-wide service integration:* Collaboration with the school nurse, student intervention team, teachers, administrators, school counselors and other building staff.
- *Standardized assessment and progress monitoring:* Use of screening/assessment tools, treatment plan implementation, and follow-up.

