

Frameworks and Planning for Strong School-SBHC Collaboration

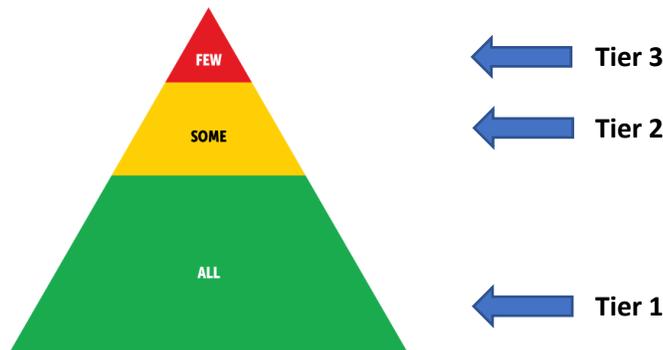
Student Support Frameworks in Washington

SBHCs collaborate with schools to support students, so it is helpful for SBHCs to understand the frameworks schools in Washington use for student support services.

In 2016, the Washington State Legislature created the [Washington Integrated Student Supports Protocol](#) (WISSP). The WISSP was one of an extensive set of interdependent strategies for closing educational opportunity gaps recommended by the State’s Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EGOAC). The components of the WISSP framework include needs assessments, community partnerships, coordination of supports, integration within the school, and a data-driven approach. The WISSP was developed in part to assist schools with collaborating with community providers to make sure barriers to academic success are eliminated.

Washington state uses the **Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)** model for student support services provided in schools. The components of the MTSS framework represent the combination of Response to Intervention (RtI) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). MTSS emerged as a framework from the work conducted in public health emphasizing three tiers of prevention. Schools can apply this model as a way to align academic, behavioral, social and emotional supports to improve education for all students. To learn more about MTSS in Washington, see the [Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction’s \(OSPI’s\) resource page](#).

In practice, the MTSS is a framework focused on prevention and problem-solving for all students. All students should be supported with school-wide Tier 1 interventions such as social and emotional literacy curriculum and academic and behavioral expectations. The school district and school administration are focused on providing Tier 1 services. Some students will benefit from supplemental Tier 2 instruction and support such as additional tutoring, behavioral and mental health interventions, etc. A smaller number of students will benefit from Tier 3 instruction and support, usually provided by community partners and specialized programs that provide more intensive support and possibly case management.



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Planning to Integrate

During initial discussions with a school district or school administration about opening a SBHC in a school, it is helpful to learn more about the existing student support services (Tiers 1 & 2) the school is providing:

- At what level are school nurse and school counseling services available?
- Is there a school psychologist?
- Are there school social workers, family support workers, or other student support service providers in the school?
- Are there other community service providers (Tiers 2 & 3) that provide services on-site or work closely with the school around off-site referrals?
- How will the SBHC integrate with and help strengthen existing systems of support?

A school that is providing strong Tier 1 services and coordinated student support services to all students will be a more effective partner for the SBHC sponsor. The SBHC will be able to focus on serving students needing Tier 2 services (and identifying those that may need additional Tier 3 services) while the school will be focused on providing Tier 1 services.

Without strong Tier 1 services in the school, the SBHC care team may not be able to work at the top of their licensure because they will be trying to meet the needs of more students at all levels of support. The SBHC may need to rethink their service and staffing model to meet the needs of students if the school or school district has limited resources to provide Tier 1 services.

Planning for SBHC Mental Health Model of Care

It is beneficial to establish the SBHC's mental health model of care early in the planning process to maximize student benefit in coordination with other supports available in the school and community. The model of care can clarify the goals of mental health services in the SBHC, how care plans are established, how student progress is assessed, and how many visits students will have with the SBHC provider before reassessing the need for SBHC services or the need for referral to other community mental health providers.

The [King County SBHC Mental Health Model of Care](#), as an example, sets expectations that the goal of therapy in the SBHC is to help students through the challenges they are currently facing and equip them with skills and tools needed to handle these challenges in the future. Graduating students from SBHC care when they're ready allows for more students to be served during the school year.

For those who need more intensive or ongoing, longer-term therapy, a referral to an external community behavioral health provider may be the best option because SBHC providers are typically only available during the school year. A high-risk caseload in the SBHC might therefore be limited to those

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students who have barriers to accessing care outside of the school with an understanding that a service plan for summer and extended school breaks needs to be established for these students.

Planning to Communicate

While management of the SBHC falls to the healthcare sponsor, the SBHC would not be able to operate successfully in the school without the support of the school administration and coordination with school staff.

Communication for Care Coordination. Having regular SBHC team meetings with the school nurse, school counselors, family support workers, school social workers, among other roles that are supporting families and students' well-being in the school will be helpful in ensuring that students are not "falling through the cracks," or on the other end of the spectrum, receiving too much uncoordinated and potentially duplicative services. Coordinated care between school staff, the SBHC, and other community service providers in the school is possible with good communication between parties and shared care coordination procedures.

Communication with School Administration. Holding regular meetings between the SBHC sponsor and the school administration is important throughout SBHC planning, implementation, and operations phases:

- Quarterly meetings in the first year of SBHC operations will help the sponsor and school identify areas of success and areas for improvement while they work through their first year of learning.
- Semi-annual meetings and progress reports after the first year, to update on SBHC operations and impact, may be adequate for ongoing operations if in-person and email communication is ongoing.

SBHC progress reports might include information such as total students served, total students registered, total visits broken down by service type, top five reasons for student visits, total students assisted with enrolling in health insurance, and total outreach and health education activities executed by the SBHC.

It is also important for the SBHC sponsor to share with the school administration any proposed expansion or changes in services at the SBHC.

Planning for Additional Collaborations

During initial SBHC planning or after the SBHC is open, other community service providers may be identified that could complement the work of the SBHC in the school. In that case, school administration

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will review and approve any proposed new collaborations and develop separate agreements with any outside service provider prior to inviting them into the school or the SBHC space.

SBHCs might consider creating partnerships with local universities to open up the SBHC as a teaching site for trainees in the medical and mental health fields. If SBHC providers want to work with fellows, students or interns, this can be an opportunity to expand access to care for students, provide additional support to SBHC providers, and help develop the SBHC workforce in Washington.