

School-Based Health Centers in WA State

Frequently Asked Questions



What is a School-Based Health Center (SBHC)?

A SBHC is a student-focused center located in or adjacent to a school where students can receive integrated medical, behavioral health, and other healthcare services such as dental care.

How are SBHCs operated and funded?

Collaboration & management

SBHCs are a collaboration between school districts and local healthcare providers such as community health centers, hospitals or healthcare systems, public health departments, and tribal programs. The sponsor staffs and manages operations of the SBHC.

Funding

SBHCs may be funded through a mix of public funding, private donations, the community benefit contribution of healthcare sponsors, public and private insurance billing, and in-kind support from school districts and schools.

Staffing

SBHCs are staffed according to school community needs and resources. SBHCs typically include at minimum a primary care provider, behavioral healthcare provider, and a clinic coordinator. Dental and other health professionals may also provide services at the SBHC.

Hours of operation

SBHCs are open during the school day to serve students where they already spend much of their time—at school. Ideally a SBHC has a consistent presence in the school, open for as many days of the week as students need and resources allow. Some SBHCs are also open outside of school hours to serve families, school staff, or community members.

Insurance enrollment & coordination of care

SBHCs help students and families enroll in insurance and connect with a primary care provider and other specialty providers as needed. SBHCs coordinate care with other community service providers to ensure efficient and effective care.

Coordination with school community

SBHCs are integrated within the school community to optimize student and school-wide wellness. The SBHC care team collaborates with students, families, teachers, the school nurse, counselors, other staff and school leadership to support student development and academic success.

For more information, visit Wasbha.org

What services do SBHCs provide?

From primary to integrated care

SBHCs provide comprehensive primary medical care that may include preventive well-child care, health screening and education, sports physicals, immunizations, management of chronic medical conditions, treatment of illness or injury, laboratory services, prescription of medication, reproductive health services, and referrals. Ideally SBHCs offer an integrated model of primary medical care and mental health counseling to address the needs of the whole child. SBHCs may also include dental or vision care, substance abuse services, nutrition counseling, and school-wide health education. Some SBHC services may be provided through mobile or telehealth programs.

Complementary care to school nurse services

SBHCs provide physical, behavioral, dental and other health services beyond the scope of the school nurse, supporting and complementing—not replacing—the school nurse role in student health. SBHC providers and the school nurse work collaboratively to improve student health and academic outcomes.

Prevention & wellness

SBHCs are a resource for prevention, wellness, and health promotion throughout the school community.

Who is served by SBHCs?

School locations

SBHCs are typically located in schools where students have socioeconomic, geographic, or other barriers to accessing healthcare in the community. A SBHC may be in any school where a need for services and resources are identified.

Eligibility for services

SBHC services are available to all students in the school. In some cases, SBHCs also serve students from other schools in the district, families of students, school staff, or community members.

Enrollment and consent

Students must be enrolled by their families to receive the full range of services provided by the SBHC. Every effort is made to involve students' families in their care. Students not enrolled in the SBHC by their families may access confidential reproductive or behavioral health services, if available in the SBHC, according to Washington state's minor consent laws as they could with any other healthcare provider in the community.