



SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CARE ADDRESSES YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Imagine going to school anxious, depressed, or even suicidal. You're not sure why you're feeling so down or when you'll be able to get help. Can you thrive? Or even get through the day? Unfortunately, that is the reality for many students in America. And that's where school-based health care comes in. School-based health services meet students where they are — in school.

When health and education come together, great things happen. Students become more resilient and connected to their schools. Attendance improves. Conditions like depression, anxiety, and challenging life events are better managed. Behavioral health issues get quick, expert attention. That's why the School-Based Health Alliance works tirelessly to unite health and education.

The School-Based Health Alliance is the national voice for school-based health care—a transformational and time-tested approach for delivering health care to children and adolescents. School-based health care means that students can speak to a mental health counselor in a safe, nurturing place without the barriers that families too often face. Simply put, school-based health care is one of the best models for assuring ALL children and adolescents can enjoy good health and achieve their fullest potential.

The consequences of untreated mental health disorders are profound, including greater risk for poor academic outcomes, suicide, substance use, and unemployment in adulthood. The school environment is often a place of protection and security for students struggling with mental health disorders. ¹



WHAT DOES SCHOOL- BASED HEALTH CARE MAKE POSSIBLE FOR YOUTH?

ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS AND GREATER CONNECTION TO SCHOOL

- A study conducted in a northeast city found that screening for mental health issues and referrals to appropriate services significantly reduced school absences and tardiness.²
- Students who receive mental health services on campus report greater connection to school and more caring relationships with adults at school.³
- In studies of SBHC service utilization, mental health counseling is repeatedly identified as the leading reason for visits by students.⁴

School-based health centers (SBHCs) are the ideal location for youth-focused primary care and mental health staff to collaboratively address students' physical and mental health needs – leading to greater success in school and in life.

WHAT DOES SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH CARE MAKE POSSIBLE FOR YOUTH?

PREVALENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IS HIGH, ACCESS IS LOW

- Approximately one out of five adolescents has a diagnosable mental health disorder, and nearly one third shows symptoms of depression. (HHS Office of Adolescent Health)
- The findings call for renewed efforts to expand service capacity to best meet the mental health care needs of this group. ⁵
- From 2005 to 2014, the prevalence of major depressive episodes in the past year increased from 13.1% to 17.3% among adolescent girls, and from 4.5% to 5.7% among boys. ⁵

SCHOOLS ARE THE PRIMARY PLACE WHERE YOUTH RECEIVE MENTAL HEALTH CARE

- Of children and youth who are receiving mental health services, 70% are getting them at school. ⁶
- Students who receive mental health services on campus report greater connection to school and more caring relationships with adults at school. ⁷

MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS IMPROVES OUTCOMES

- Students who receive mental health services on their school campus have lower suspension rates and get along better with peers than students who have mental health needs and do not receive school-based treatment. ⁸
- Oregon Healthy Teens data from 2013 and 2015 evaluated the impact of increased mental health capacity on student mental health. The study found that youth at SBHC schools that increased mental health capacity were 12% less likely to report a depressive episode, 16% less likely to report suicidal ideation, and 18% less likely to report a suicide attempt. ⁹
- The most important factor in the success of the mental health services offered by school based health centers is the staff, perceived by students as open and nonjudgmental. ¹⁰

“I really felt like I was safe here, that I could talk to them. It was just amazing to see the support that I got from them, the people that work here and it’s really amazing to see how they cared so much and that they really wanted to help me.”

SBHC Student

REFERENCES

- ¹ Fergusson DM, Woodward LJ. Mental health, educational, and social role outcomes of adolescents with depression. Archives of General Psychiatry. Mar 2002;59(3):225-231
- ² Gall G, Pagano ME, Desmond MS, Perrin JM, Murphy JM. (2000). Utility of psychosocial screening at a school-based health center. *J Sch Health*;70:292-298
- ³ Susan Stone et al., “The Relationship Between Use of School-Based Health Centers and Student-Reported School Assets,” Journal of Adolescent Health. Published online July 10, 2013. doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.05.011
- ⁴ Waszak C, Neidell S. School-Based and School-Linked Clinics: Update 1991. Washington, DC: Center for Population Options; 1991.
- ⁵ Mojtabai R, Olson M, Han B. National trends in the prevalence and treatment of depression in adolescents and young adults. *Pediatrics* 2016; 138: e20161878.
- ⁶ Rones, M., & Hoagwood, K. (2000). School-based mental health services: A research review. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology*, 3 (4), 223-241.)
- ⁷ Susan Stone et al., “The Relationship Between Use of School-Based Health Centers and Student-Reported School Assets,” Journal of Adolescent Health. Published online July 10, 2013. doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.05.011.
- ⁸ Strolin-Goltzman, J. The Relationship between School-Based Health Centers and the Learning Environment. *Journal of School Health* 80, no. 3 (2010): 153-159. doi: 10.1111/j.1746-1561.2009.00480.x.)
- ⁹ SBHCs, Depression & Suicide Risk Among Adolescents. (Paschall & Bersamin, 2017; Am J of Preventive Medicine)
- ¹⁰ Connecticut School Based Health Centers Engage Adolescent African-American and Latino Males in Mental Health Services . CT Association of School Based Health Centers, 2012.

