

School Nursing & School-Based Health Centers in the United States

Working Together for Student Success



School nurses and school-based health centers working together share a critical mission: protecting and advancing the health and well-being of our nation's school-age children. One does not replace the need for the other. Each has a distinct and complementary function.

What happens when school nurses and school-based health centers work together?

- Students' health, overall well-being, and academic success improve.¹
- Students acquire the health knowledge and skills they need to become independent in providing self-care.
- School absence rates decrease and graduation rates increase.²
- Student access to equitable health care increases, including health promotion, disease prevention, and illness management.
- Continuity of care occurs when health professionals coordinate with each other about student health needs. This frees educators to focus on teaching and allows parents/caregivers to remain at work.³

School-Based Health Centers

Bring a multidisciplinary healthcare team from local health organizations to provide an array of services to the school, in person and/or via telehealth, which may include:

- Primary care
- Prevention and early intervention
- Behavioral health counseling
- Oral health services
- Health education and nutrition counseling
- Lab work and prescriptions

Represent a shared commitment between schools and healthcare organizations to support the health, well-being, and academic success of students.⁴

Partner with school nurses to increase access to healthcare services that help students succeed in school and life.

Create a culture of health within the school community to include students, families, and school staff.

Are recommended by the CDC Community Preventive Services Task Force as an evidence-based intervention to address disparities in health and education outcomes.

Provide access to 6.6 million K-12 students (13%) from more than 2,500 school-based health centers in approximately 10,500 (10%) of public schools.⁵

Are typically funded by:

- Healthcare systems
- Grants (public and private)
- Insurance reimbursement

Learn more at www.sbh4all.org

School Nurses

Bring a multidisciplinary healthcare team from local health organizations to provide an array of services to the school, in person and/or via telehealth, which may include:

- identifying and addressing mental health issues
- leveling the field on health disparities and promoting healthy behaviors
- enrolling children in health insurance and connecting families to healthcare providers
- handling medical emergencies.⁶

Advocate for equitable, student-centered school health policies, programs, and procedures.

Lead the school health services team to address actual or potential barriers to student health and academic success.

- Develop, implement, and evaluate a student's individualized healthcare plan and emergency care plan.
- Collaborate with health and education leaders to design systems that allow students and school communities to develop their full potential.

Serve as public health sentinels within and across school populations:

- Monitor for symptoms of disease
- Screen for early detection of conditions that can lead to adverse health and academic outcomes.
- Mitigate potential health issues and school emergencies.

Provide access to individual students and entire school population; more than 95,000 nurses are employed full time in 39.3% of schools.⁷

Are typically employed by schools and districts, and paid with regular or special education funds.⁸

Learn more at www.nasn.org

Why should schools have both a school nurse and a school-based health center?

School nurses and school-based health centers assume leadership roles to advocate for healthcare & education reform, which includes funding and reimbursement, policy development/implementation, as well as a uniform data set.

Communication that is reciprocal and respectful helps to ensure continuity of healthcare services inside and outside the school setting. This allows both the school nurse and the School Based Health Center to work together toward a common health goal for the student.

School nurses and school-based health centers coordinate care, thus providing the best student-centered care possible, and ensuring the student is healthy, safe, and ready to learn.

School nurses and school-based health centers work collaboratively to address both social needs and to advocate as partners for systems level changes to help alleviate social determinants to health and their causes. The "social determinants of health" refers to the conditions in which people are born, live, learn, play, work, age, and worship, as well as what kind of access they have to healthcare services. Together these affect a wide range of health functions and overall quality-of-life outcomes.

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4. Love HE, Schlitt J, Soleimanpour S, Panchal N, Behr C. Twenty Years Of School-Based Health Care Growth And Expansion. *Health Affairs (Millwood)*. 2019;38(5):755-764.
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