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Interim Guidance for School-Based Health Centers Regarding COVID-19

Revised March 9, 2021

The New York State Department of Health (Department) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continue to closely monitor COVID-19. In response to the outbreak, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's Executive Order 202 declared a state disaster emergency on March 7, 2020.

This communication provides guidance to New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), **School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs)** on the provision of services during the COVID-19 public health emergency in New York State. This revised guidance is intended to further support program staff during ongoing service provision at open SBHCs, clarify guidance for changes to the status of SBHC operations, and ensure best practices for the reopening of temporarily closed clinics for onsite/in-person service provision.

SBHCs should work closely with their school administration to determine if and how the SBHCs can provide services. If a SBHC is required to remain closed or to close their site after reopening, the operator is responsible for ensuring the school administration and families served by the SBHC are informed of where and how families can access student's healthcare records and access primary and preventive care services typically provided at the SBHC site.

SBHCs are a critical healthcare access point for children in New York State. Maintaining safe and reliable access to routine preventive care and follow-up services is of the utmost importance. In accordance with the "HEALTH ADVISORY: Ensuring Access to Health Care Services During COVID-19" issued by NYSDOH, healthcare providers should contact patients who may have missed routine preventive care or follow-up appointments during the COVID-19 public health emergency, including ensuring children receive doses of recommended vaccines they may have otherwise missed. For strategies to safely ensure access to services, best practices for contacting patients, and resources for providers, please see the Health Advisory here:

https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/05/doh_covid19_accessroutinehealthcare_051920.pdf

On-site SBHC-Primary Care

SBHCs that open for on-site services during the public health emergency must ensure compliance with the following requirements:

- Notify all families with children eligible to receive services. Notification must include: the name, location, and contact information for open clinics; enrollment and consent requirements; eligibility requirements to receive services; the necessity of scheduling an appointment before showing up in-person; the phone number for calling the clinic to schedule an appointment; and any other pertinent information as defined in SBHC guidance or policy.
- Adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) is provided for staff.
- SBHCs should share policies and procedures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including plans to comply with COVID-19 infection control requirements with the school administration and families.
- Ensure all persons entering the clinic have been screened either prior to or upon entry into the clinic and avoid walk-ins whenever possible.

SBHCs must meet the requirements outlined in current applicable guidance issued by federal, state, and local oversight entities. SBHCs should follow NYSDOH and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations related to infection prevention and control to prevent the spread of COVID-19. You must review this guidance and make any adjustments necessary to clinic operations to protect the health and safety of the public and of your staff:

- <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/providers.htm>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/guidance-hcf.html>

SBHC should carefully assess the need for services to be provided in-person. This includes determining:

- Can the service be postponed until the risk of COVID-19 transmission is lower?
- Can the service be performed remotely by telehealth?

When SBHCs utilize telehealth, including telephonic services, as a method of service delivery SBHCs shall do so in compliance with NYSDOH guidance as outlined in the May 2020 Special Edition Volume 36 Number 9 Medicaid Update at:

https://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/program/update/2020/no05_2020-03_covid-19_telehealth.htm

(Note: For questions regarding Medicaid coverage of SBHC services, contact the Office of Health Insurance Programs (OHIP) Division of Program Development and Management at (518) 473-2160 or FFSMedicaidPolicy@health.ny.gov.)

COVID-19 Testing at SBHCs

NYSDOH recognizes the value of SBHCs partnering with other providers in the community to address COVID-19 testing needs. Becoming a testing site is a decision to be made by SBHC program staff after carefully reviewing testing protocols and responsibilities outlined in current testing center guidance for providers. Additional provider guidance for performing COVID-19 testing as well as guidance for the Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12 school setting can be found here:

- Guidance for Private Physician Practices Operating Specimen Collection Sites:
https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/04/doh_covid19_privatepracticesamplingsites_041920.pdf

- Interim Guidance for In-Person Instruction at Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency:
<https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools MasterGuidance.pdf>
- Guidelines for In-Person Instruction at Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools:
https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/P12_EDU_Summary_Guidelines.pdf
- Checklist for Pre-K to Grade 12 School Reopening Plans:
https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/P12_Checklist.pdf

(Note: the above list is applicable at the time of the issuance of this guidance. Any SBHC performing COVID-19 testing must be in compliance with all applicable current guidance.)

Any SBHC program choosing to perform COVID-19 testing at SBHC clinics must work closely with the NYS DOH, Local Health Departments (LHDs), and health care providers in their community to ensure all requirements for operating a testing center are being met as well as determining who has responsibility for testing. In addition, the SBHC must coordinate with school administration before establishing a testing site to ensure the plans for the site are included in the school's reopening plan. Operating requirements for SBHCs identified above and in other relevant guidance documents remain applicable and are not waived if a clinic begins COVID-19 testing.

SBHC-Dental Care

Similar to dental practices, SBHC dental operators must submit a plan before resuming dental services. Proposed reopening of SBHCs providing dental services must account for an understanding that aerosol generating procedures may increase the risk of droplet and airborne transmission of COVID-19, the need for physical distancing plans, the presence of efficient HVAC systems, and infection control management that includes added precautions for preventing transmission of COVID-19 to protect patients, healthcare providers, support staff and others in the proximity of the school/space provided for dental services. **At this time, SBHC may not provide dental services until a reopening plan is approved. The plan must account for all of the requirements for the operation of dentistry facilities as outlined in *Interim Guidance for Dentistry During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (Dental Master Guidance)* located here:**

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/DentistryMasterGuidance.pdf>

Each operator must submit one complete reopening plan identifying all sites they wish to reopen. Reopening plans for SBHC-Dental Care programs must consist of:

- A completed checklist from *Best Practices for Infection Control In Dental Clinics During the COVID-19 Pandemic* issued by the Organization for Safety, Asepsis, and Prevention and the DentaQuest Partnership for Oral Health Advancement found here:
https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.osap.org/resource/resmgr/dentaquest/INC-1353_Best_Practices_for_.pdf
- A signed copy of the *New York State Department of Health School-Based Health Center Dental Program Reopening Addendum* (the Addendum).
- A list of all school sites to request reopening approval.
- Justifications for each N/A response documented in the completed checklist.

By signing and submitting the Addendum a sponsor is verifying, among other things, that:

- Each site listed in the reopening plan meets the requirements outlined in the Dental Master Guidance; and
- A collaborative planning effort has been made with school administration at every site applying for approval to reopen.

(Please refer to the Addendum for a complete list of criteria being attested to.)

The completed reopening plan must be submitted to: SBHC-Dreports@health.ny.gov. The NYSDOH School Health Unit must notify a sponsor that the reopening plan is approved prior to any SBHC-Dental Care clinics reopening.

At this time, all SBHC dental facilities should:

- Maintain on-call procedures/after hour contacts to respond to urgent and emerging dental issues for patients/parents or caregivers.
- Consider telephonic and teledentistry service provision to give parents/caregivers and students a way to address oral health needs for students, particularly until such time that NYSDOH approves the facility's reopening plan.

Any sponsor unable to open at this time because their SBHC dental clinics cannot meet all of the requirements outlined in the Dental Master Guidance must inform NYSDOH by emailing: SBHC-Dreports@health.ny.gov.

Guard Against Stigma

Organizations should work to prevent actions that could perpetuate stigma attached to COVID-19. There is absolutely no excuse for using the outbreak to spread racism or other forms of discrimination. Organizations should encourage staff to stay informed, remain vigilant and take care of each other.

This is an emerging, rapidly changing situation. For questions please contact your local department of health or the NYS Department of Health Novel Coronavirus hotline at **1-888-364-3065**.

If you have additional questions about SBHC operations in response to COVID-19 please review relevant guidance documents to determine the appropriate contact. Please continue to inform the contract manager at the NYSDOH Bureau of Child Health for your SBHC program of any changes in operations including closures, reopening of sites, and staffing changes.

Thank you all for your continued work to ensure access to safe and efficient health care services for the children of New York State.

Sincerely,
Your SBHC Team

More information

NYSDOH COVID-19 Webpage:

<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>

NYSDOH information and resources available to health care providers:

<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/providers.htm> (Please refer to this site periodically for updates)

American Dental Association Coronavirus Resources for Dentists:

<https://success.ada.org/en/practice-management/patients/infectious-diseases-2019-novel-coronavirus>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Webpage:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Webpage COVID 19 in Dental Settings:

<https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/infectioncontrol/statement-COVID.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Children's Health FAQ:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/children-faq.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fspecific-groups%2Fchildren-faq.html

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Child Care, Schools, and Youth Services:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Healthcare Settings:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Finfection-control.html

Local Health Departments Contact Information:

https://www.health.ny.gov/contact/contact_information/index.htm

New York State Center for School Health Coronavirus Resources:

<https://www.schoolhealthny.com/coronavirus>

New York State Department of Education Coronavirus Guidance for P-12 Schools:

<http://www.nysed.gov/coronavirus/guidance-p-12-schools>

Organization for Safety, Asepsis, and Prevention *Best Practices for Infection Control In Dental Clinics During the COVID-19 Pandemic:*

https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.osap.org/resource/resmgr/dentaquest/INC-1353_Best_Practices_for_.pdf

Guidance for Private Physician Practices Operating Specimen Collection Sites:

https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/04/doh_covid19_privatepracticesamplingsites_041920.pdf

Interim Guidance for In-Person Instruction at Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency:

[https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools MasterGuidance.pdf](https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/Pre-K%20to%20Grade%2012%20Schools%20MasterGuidance.pdf)

Guidelines for In-Person Instruction at Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools:

[https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/P12 EDU Summary Guidelines.pdf](https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/P12_EDU_Summary_Guidelines.pdf)

Checklist for Pre-K to Grade 12 School Reopening Plans:

[https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/P12 Checklist.pdf](https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/P12_Checklist.pdf)