

School Based Health Centers – On the Front Line for Children

Essential Health Services Regardless of Ability to Pay

Impacting Children and Families

- A recently immigrated parent brings her 7-year-old daughter to enroll in a public school close to the shelter where they reside without health record or proof of vaccinations. They are sent by the main office to the school-based health center (SBHC) where the child receives a physical exam and her first set of vaccinations. She is enrolled and starts school that day.
- A high school student overdosed and was non-responsive in the hallway until the provider from the SBHC administered Narcan, revived him and brought him to the health clinic while EMS was on the way.
- A 10-year-old has an asthma attack in a Bronx school, his parents working 90 minutes away in Brooklyn. An asthma nebulizer treatment is administered at the SBHC, a prescription for preventive medication is provided. His primary care provider is contacted, and he returns to class. His mom picks him up after school after completing her shift at work.
- A 14-year-old distraught teen walks into her SBHC after getting in over her head with a 21-year-old boyfriend the day before. She has an immediate confidential visit, given plan B, screened for STI including HIV, a return appointment for her results and a reproductive health care visit as well as an appointment for counseling are given to the youth. She returns to class to complete her school day.

Every day, 159,736 children and teens grades K-12, including 22,516 residing in temporary housing, and 4,839 migrant children residing in the most impoverished neighborhoods of NYC have access to medical, mental health, and often dental and vision care provided by SBHCs. These centers operate in 460 schools across 140 school campuses throughout the five boroughs of NYC.

What is a SBHC?

School-Based Health Centers (SBHC) were established by Chapter 198 of the NYS Laws of 1978 “to improve accessibility and availability of quality comprehensive and preventative physical and mental health services to preschool, elementary, middle and secondary school students in high-risk areas of New York State.”

SBHCs are health clinics in schools, staffed by multidisciplinary teams of full-time medical providers, nurses, medical assistants, receptionists, mental health providers; many include health educators and community outreach workers, dentists, hygienists, and optometrists.

SBHC services include:

- Immunizations for COVID 19, flu, HPV and all other childhood vaccinations required for school attendance.
- Treatment for chronic illness, most notably asthma and diabetes, with significant reductions in emergency room use and hospitalization and improved attendance at school.
- Immediate treatment for acute illnesses and injuries.

- For teens, access to confidential reproductive health services and onsite contraceptive methods including Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives (LARC), HIV screening, and STI screening and treatment for thousands of youths.
- Preventive dentistry providing sealant and fluoride treatment to thousands of children.
- Mental health services include crisis intervention, screening, and ongoing individual and group counseling. SBHCs are routinely called upon to help students with problems such as depression/anxiety, abuse, family violence, substance use, suicidal feelings, post-traumatic stress, and gang pressure. Principals of schools with school-based health centers that provide mental health services speak of them as a virtual necessity.
- All services provided in SBHCs are **at no cost to families and regardless of their immigration status.**

History of SBHCs in NYC and Funding

In 1991, the City Council funded for the first time 5 SBHCs through Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), one in each borough. In September 2006, Mayor Bloomberg’s Commission for Economic Opportunity (CEO) wrote a report on [Increasing Opportunity and Reducing Poverty in NYC](#) which included a strong recommendation to “expand SBHCs and reproductive health services” to reduce poverty among children and young adults in NYC. This led to the expansion of SBHCs. Beginning in 2012, the Bloomberg, and then in 2014, the Di Blasio administrations invested over \$80,000,000 in capital funding to establish 50+ new SBHCs in Community/Renewal Schools. They were formerly known as “suspension” or “failing” schools.

NYC’s SBHCs receive funding through a variety of public funding streams. Medicaid is the primary contributor, accounting for over 50% of the annual budget, while private insurance covers approximately 10%. Some operating costs are covered by sponsoring institutions. Private and public capital and start-up grants help with construction and some initial operational costs for new SBHCs. The remaining revenues come from federal, state and city grant funding. NYC accounts **for 6%** of the total annual budget through approximately \$7.8 million in City Tax Levy dollars for 35 of the 140 SBHCs in NYC (105 receive no direct funding from NYC). SBHCs have yet to recover from the significant loss of approximately \$26 million in Medicaid revenue when schools were closed during COVID.

SBHCs: Health Equity at its Best

School-based health centers serve and work to ensure that our most vulnerable children get access to primary medical and mental health care. All services are offered without regard to financial status, citizenship, or insurance status. SBHCs have been shown to:

- Increase health care access and wellness visits by students.
- Reduce emergency room use; reduce hospitalization and increase school attendance.
- Attract harder-to-reach populations, especially migrants, minorities, and males, and do a better job at providing crucial services such as mental health care and high-risk behavior screens.
- Significantly decrease absenteeism and tardiness among adolescents receiving counseling.
- Increase willingness to seek medical services, especially for students reporting depression and past suicide attempts, and those seeking information on pregnancy prevention.
- Have higher rates of screening/treatment for STIs HIV/AIDS, patients report increased condom use.
- Reduce teen births/pregnancies by offering on site contraceptive services including LARC.
- Increase the use of LARC, 12% of sexually active females on LARC as compared to 5.8% nationally.
- Reduce costs, between 2008 and 2017, SBHCs averted an estimated 5,376 pregnancies, 2,104 births and 3,085 abortions, an estimated \$30,360,352 of publicly funded births and abortions.

NYC's SBHCs are an Essential Service for Parents, Children, and Schools

SBHCs relieve principals, teachers and administrative staff from time consuming medical and mental health emergencies, creating a calmer and more stable environment for children to learn. Parents, especially those with children with chronic health conditions, rely on SBHCs to enable them to avoid work loss and maintain steady employment. Students love them because they meet children where they are – in their schools.

The massive influx of newly migrated families makes SBHCs more important than ever. There is unprecedented need for mental health services post COVID. It is the worst time to reduce services and staff for this essential safety net service. Unfortunately, cutbacks and underfunding are forcing many SBHCs to reduce services and some to close altogether. **Ironically, NYC is required to place and pay for a school nurse to provide minimal first aid and medication administration services for schools when a SBHC closes. Similar funding could serve as a financial anchor for SBHCs citywide.**

ASK: We request baseline funding for all NYC SBHCs to prevent further service reductions and closures. We propose a baseline funding model of \$100,000 per school campus, plus \$100 per student enrolled in the school.

SBHCs in Your District

This packet includes a map of the SBHCs in your district and the families and children positively impacted by them. SBHCs provide a critical service for your constituents but run under the radar until there is a crisis. **We welcome you to visit one in your district to witness their importance firsthand.**

We will be contacting your office to schedule a time to discuss further.

Sincerely,

***The NYC School Based Health Alliance,
A Chapter of the New York School Based Health Alliance***



Scan this QR code to access a document featuring a map of all NYCs SBHCs by city council district along with information on number of students served, including migrants and students in temporary housing