



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

April 2, 2020

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This communication provides guidance to New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) **School-Based Health Centers (SBHC)** on COVID-19 response and providing services during the current COVID-19 state of emergency in New York State.

SBHCs should work with their school districts to determine if they can or should continue to provide preventive pediatric services during school closures.

SBHCs should follow NYSDOH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations related to infection prevention and control to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Please 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>

In addition, when feasible and appropriate, SBHCs may utilize telehealth as a method of service delivery, as outlined in the March 2020 Medicaid Update:

[https://www.health.ny.gov/health\\_care/medicaid/program/update/2020/index.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/program/update/2020/index.htm)

Any clinics open during the state of emergency will need to ensure compliance with the following requirements:

- Notification must be provided to the school administration informing the administration of the clinic's intended actions.
- Notification must be sent to the families of any child eligible for services upon the determination to remain open. 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.
- Clinics must follow SBHC requirements to only provide services to children residing in the district, 21 years of age and younger.
- SBHCs may choose to waive the requirement that students enroll in the clinic to receive services, temporarily, as schools are closed in response to the COVID-19. *(Note: If a SBHC is opting to serve unenrolled children, the SBHC is doing so voluntarily. It is the responsibility of the clinic to address any relevant billing/reimbursement issues caused by not having enrollment documentation.)*

- Consent for service provision must be obtained. It is recommended that enrollment/consent for unenrolled children be completed when they present for their clinic visit.
- Compliance must be maintained with existing policies and new guidance issued, as appropriate.
- In order to prevent unnecessary exposures, clinics should work to screen and triage by phone. Families should be encouraged to participate in visits for children, by appointment, avoiding unscreened walk-ins whenever possible.
- Clinics should ensure that personal protective equipment is available. Clinics should have protocols in place for the triage and handling of patients if COVID-19 is suspected.

As your team works to determine what services your clinic should offer and/or whether your clinics will remain open, consider:

- Can the service be postponed until the risk of COVID-19 transmission is lower?
- Can the service be done remotely by other means (e.g., phone call, video conference, telehealth)?

The NYSDOH recommends that non-essential or elective dental care should be postponed until further notice. Therefore:

- All SBHC dental facilities should postpone non-urgent dental services until further notice, in accordance with school closure policies for COVID-19.
- Dental providers should maintain on-call procedures/after hour contacts to respond to urgent and emerging dental issues for patients/parents or caregivers.

### **General Infection Prevention Strategies**

Organizations should encourage staff to routinely employ infection prevention strategies to reduce transmission of common respiratory viruses (e.g., influenza or “flu” or “the common cold”).

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing or use the inside of your elbow.
- Keep your hands clean (wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds). Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer consisting of at least 60% alcohol, if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Get the flu shot (at this time, there is no current vaccination for coronaviruses).

### **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 as a way to spread racism and discrimination. Organizations should encourage staff to stay informed, remain vigilant and take care of each other.

This is an 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 submit them to your contract manager and:

- For SBHCs providing medical services: [SBHCreports@health.ny.gov](mailto:SBHCreports@health.ny.gov).
- For SBHCs providing dental services: [SBHC-Dreports@health.ny.gov](mailto:SBHC-Dreports@health.ny.gov).

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](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)

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