

School-Based Health Centers Research Brief Series: Key Takeaways for Local Community and School Leaders

School-based health centers (SBHCs)—primary care centers affiliated with schools that provide medical, and often mental health, services to students and community members—can help address disparities in access to health care. Our first research brief explores the role of SBHCs and highlights their potential to promote children’s health and wellbeing. The second describes the opportunities and challenges related to the pivot to telehealth, which some SBHCs have made during the pandemic.

Realizing the Potential of SBHCs: Brief and Implementation Guide Highlights

- Research shows SBHCs benefit students’ health and may also improve academic outcomes.
- Federal policies such as the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid, and Every Student Succeeds Act have expanded opportunities for these centers in recent years.
- **Essential planning steps** for opening a SBHC:
 - Evaluate the policy environment in your local community
 - Identify needs and build community support
 - Address school leadership and staff changes
 - Choose a health care provider
 - Ensure adequate facilities
 - Secure start-up funding
 - Create and sustain a funding base
 - Share information effectively



Re-Envisioning SBHCs during Covid-19: Brief Highlights

- Policy changes and waivers have increased the use of telehealth during the pandemic, which has revealed both opportunities and challenges.
- **Key opportunities:**
 - Increased access to health care
 - Expanded role as resource hub for patients
 - Potential cost-savings from not having to purchase supplies necessary to operate in person



Key challenges:

- Limited internet connectivity and device availability in rural areas and underserved communities
- Not all health services can be delivered via telehealth
- Preserving provider-patient confidentiality can be a challenge with increased parent presence