Medicaid Opportunities to Support Preventive Care for Children Through School-Based Health Centers

School-based health centers (SBHCs) provide preventive care, behavioral health, and other essential services, especially for children who face barriers to accessing health services, including those living in rural and/or low-income communities. With Medicaid covering about 40 percent of children nationwide, it can play a central role in strengthening SBHCs.

What are School-Based Health Centers?

SBHCs typically operate on school grounds and are funded by local partners, such as hospitals or pediatric groups, to provide:

- Preventive care and screenings
- Vision and dental care
- Behavioral health services
- Chronic-condition supports



Benefits of School-Based Health Centers

School-based health centers are associated with:



Increased access to preventive care
More well-child and dental visits, as well as more regular sources of care



Improved mental health outcomes
Fewer mental health-related emergency department (ED) visits



Increased healthy behaviors
More physical activity and healthier food choices; reduced alcohol and illicit substance use



Better chronic condition management
Increased medication use and fewer ED visits and hospitalizations among children with asthma



Enhanced academic performance
Better attendance, grades, and graduation rates

How Medicaid Can Strengthen School-Based Health Centers

State Medicaid agencies can:

1. **Expand Medicaid coverage for school-based services** through state plan amendments and managed care contracts.
2. **Recognize SBHCs as Medicaid providers** and simplify billing processes.
3. **Partner with education and public health agencies** to align goals and resources.
4. **Strengthen the school-based workforce** through provider training and support.
5. **Engage families to identify barriers to accessing SBHCs** and inform Medicaid policies.
6. **Use SBHC data** to measure impact on health and education outcomes.



Center for Health Care Strategies

To learn more, read *Improving Access to Children's Preventive Care: Medicaid Opportunities in School Settings* at CHCS.org/school-based-health-centers.

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