



STARTING A SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTER

Frequently Asked Questions

1. ***What is the first step in starting a SBHC?*** Learn as much as you can about SBHCs; collect preliminary information about health needs of your students i.e., why do you need a SBHC?; and identify a few key supporters including the school nurse, school counselors, principal; community health center, health department, private physicians; and parent leaders. Anticipate the possibility of public resistance and develop a support base before participating in activities such as committee meetings or public hearings. Finally, have a health care entity willing to take a lead role in planning and implementation.
2. ***What additional steps are needed?*** Determine feasibility – you must have the support of the key players in the community; is there space available in the school? Are there some possibilities for funding? Do you have a health care entity to manage the program? Seek formal approval by identifying a school system liaison to facilitate the process, engaging key individuals to speak publicly on behalf of the project, and establishing a formal written contract.
3. ***Who should be involved in the planning?*** The key supporters above, or their representatives, plus parents, youth, hospital representatives, family resource network, mental health providers, and any other influential leaders in the community who might lend their support.
4. ***Who administers SBHCs in WV?*** Most of the SBHCs are administered by community health centers; one program is operated by a community hospital; several of the programs subcontract with other health entities in the community for services, such as medical consultant oversight from a university or private pediatrician, mental health services through the community behavioral health center; or dental services through a university or private dentist.
5. ***What are facility start-up costs?*** Start-up costs are those associated with remodeling, if needed, and supplies and equipment. It is difficult to come up with a cost estimate because it depends upon the services provided and the extent of remodeling. Some programs get much of the start up covered by donations. Equipment lists and floor plans are available.
6. ***How are SBHCs currently funded?*** Most programs rely on a combination of state, local, private foundation grants; and reimbursement from third party insurance. Some of the community health centers use a portion of their federal 330 grants also.
7. ***What services should be offered?*** The minimum set of services offered should include primary medical care (diagnosis and treatment); preventive care – i.e., comprehensive well child exams; lab tests, and immunizations. It is strongly recommended to include behavioral health services from the outset. Services should be available to all students, regardless of payer source or lack of insurance.
8. ***What kind of staff is needed?*** Minimum staff should include an administrative coordinator, an office/care coordinator, nurse/medical assistant, a nurse practitioner or physician's assistant, and a physician who may provide direct care or serve in a medical consultant capacity.
9. ***Where should the SBHC be located?*** The preferred location for a SBHC is in the school, in a visible, high traffic area. Where the SBHC will be part of a new school, it is often placed within the

guidance counseling suite. When there is not space inside the school, modular units are a possible option.

10. **What procedures need to be in place to operate a SBHC?** If the SBHC is operated by a health care entity, they would be familiar with federal and state requirements. Sample procedures and policies are available.
11. **Can the SBHC serve more than one school?** Yes – definitely. This decision should be part of the planning process. Some SBHCs start out by serving one school then gradually expand to include other schools for services such as immunization campaigns or well child exams. The “hub and spoke” model is recommended to serve multiple schools to reach more children without drastically increasing administration costs.
12. **What are the requirements in WV for a SBHC?** Federal and state requirements for a SBHC are essentially the same as for the sponsoring health care provider and depend on the type of sponsor such as hospital vs. federally qualified health center or rural health clinic. In addition, the Bureau for Public Health has standards for the SBHCs that they fund. The standards are available at www.wvsbha.org.
13. **How do students pay for services?** Students are not expected to pay at the SBHC. Bills may be sent home to parents, but students are never turned away based upon ability to pay. All of the programs bill Medicaid, SCHIP, and private insurers. Community health centers offer a discounted fee for most services based on the parents’ income; some of the programs use grants to cover the co pays and deductibles for students to eliminate that barrier to continued care.
14. **How are parents and others involved?** Parents and the community should be involved from the very beginning in the planning of a SBHC. Once operational it is important to maintain community support; WV’s standards include the expectation that a SBHC will maintain an advisory committee that is made up of a majority of parents and/or users and the committee will meet at least two times a year. The SBHC should also include parents as much as possible in the decisions regarding their child’s care. This is done by encouraging parents to participate in clinic visits, by phone calls and by letters from the nurse or provider prior to a visit and in follow-up. Parental consent for care, in addition to parental feedback on quality of services is also obtained.
15. **How do SBHCs work with local providers? The school nurse?** The SBHC should have written policies and procedures regarding sharing of information with local providers and school personnel. The school nurse should be part of the planning team and is a partner in the care of students. Regular meetings with the school nurse should be established.
16. **What kind of technical assistance is available to help with start-up?** The SBHC Technical Assistance and Evaluation team at Marshall University provides email and phone consultations and some on-site assistance. For contact information, visit www.wvsbha.org and select “technical assistance, and evaluation”. **In addition, a SBHC start up guide is available.**
17. **Where can I find additional information?**

WV School Based Health Assembly: www.wvsbha.org

National Assembly on School Based Health Care: www.nasbhc.org

Health Centers and Health Care in Schools: www.healthinschools.org

Center for School Mental Health Analysis and Action, U of Maryland:
<http://csmh.umaryland.edu>