

## **New Mexico Alliance for School-Based Health Care** **Defining Characteristics of Exemplary School-Based Health Centers<sup>1</sup>**

A New Mexico school-based health center, having first met the **five basic defining characteristics** of a New Mexico school-based health center<sup>2</sup> may aspire to achieve a higher level of performance. In an effort to provide guidance on and recognize exceptional school-based health centers (SBHCs), the New Mexico Alliance for School-Based Health Care has established **seven fundamental defining characteristics of an exemplary SBHC**. SBHCs that are well integrated into their school and community are involved in various activities within each of these seven fundamental characteristics. This framework is used to plan, implement, and evaluate an exemplary SBHC.

- 1. Student-Centered Services: Delivers comprehensive integrated student-focused care and offers services that are accessible, confidential, culturally responsive, and developmentally appropriate, as demonstrated by the following:**
  - A. The SBHC uses an interdisciplinary team approach to deliver high quality, comprehensive and integrated physical and behavioral health services, including provision of a comprehensive wellness exam for all youth who access services through the SBHC.
  - B. The SBHC provides services and materials that are culturally responsive, respectful of diversity and individuals' values, and youth-friendly.
  - C. Special attention is paid to provision of services to youth with high risk and/or need.
  - D. The SBHC promotes availability of on-site services whenever the center is open and assists with access to after-hours care 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week
  - E. The SBHC ensures access to care by accepting walk-ins and offers same-day appointments, when possible.
  - F. SBHC staff provide coordination of care for all students as needed, such as monitoring, referral and follow-up for chronic disease, hospitalizations, injuries, acute illnesses, medication administration and oral, behavioral, reproductive and specialty health care.
  - G. The SBHC protects confidentiality of all information regardless of whether it is transmitted through conversation, billing activity, telemedicine, or electronic communication.
  - H. The SBHC educates youth about their rights to consent, confidentiality and confidential services.
  - I. The SBHC facilitates insurance enrollment.
  - J. The SBHC follows best practices for serving Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) youth, as described by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and, where appropriate, provides a Safe Zone. <http://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm>
  
- 2. Involved Student Participants: Engages students as active participants in their health care, and encourages the role of parents/guardians, as demonstrated by the following:**
  - A. SBHC staff encourage students to be active agents in the decision-making processes related to their health care (e.g. scheduling their own appointments, managing medications, asking questions about their care) and integrate youth engagement into clinical practice.
  - B. The SBHC provides students with youth-friendly resources on relevant topics including clinical and health literacy.

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<sup>1</sup> This document is a combination of language from the work of the School-Based Health Alliance and the final revisions of the 2015 NMASBHC SBHC Definition Work Group.

<sup>2</sup> SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS IN NEW MEXICO, DEFINITION, DESCRIPTION AND DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

- C. The SBHC identifies staff to lead youth engagement efforts related to health and seeks opportunities for partnerships (i.e., with community organizations, school staff, student groups) to support those efforts.
- D. The SBHC collects feedback directly from adolescents on their health care needs using youth-friendly survey tools; the survey results are used to guide services.
- E. SBHC staff involve parents or guardians as supportive participants in the student's health care whenever appropriate and possible.
- F. SBHC staff actively involve youth, their Youth Advisory Council or other youth advisory organizations in the development, design, implementation, and evaluation of SBHC services.

**3. Responsive Health Services: Offers services that respond to the health needs of students, school staff, and the community, as demonstrated by the following:**

- A. The SBHC uses a comprehensive risk assessment tool, such as the Student Health Questionnaire (SHQ), to determine and meet the needs of individuals who come to the SBHC for services.
- B. The SBHC assesses health and wellness needs of school staff and offers services (e.g. appointments, support groups, stress management activities, and workplace wellness).
- C. The SBHC meaningfully participates in an advisory group comprised of parents, students, community members, school staff and SBHC staff, which provides guidance for SBHC programming and service delivery and advocates for the SBHC with the community.
- D. SBHC staff, in partnership with the school administration and advisory group:
  - i. Regularly reviews school and community data to identify child and adolescent health care needs and available resources in the school and community.
  - ii. Solicits youth and community input to address unmet health needs and to support the operations of the health center.
  - iii. Uses data and input to make recommendations regarding design or improvement of programs, service delivery and coordination with school and community resources.
- E. The SBHC conducts active outreach in the school and community to inform students and families and the services available.

**4. Sound Administrative and Clinical Systems: Establishes administrative and clinical systems, including sufficient staffing, to support effective delivery of services and incorporates accountability mechanisms and performance improvement practices, as demonstrated by the following:**

- A. The SBHC establishes quality improvement practices that are data driven, including, but not limited to, assessment of patient and community satisfaction and with a focus on the SBHC model of care as defined in the NMASBHC School Based Health Centers in New Mexico Definition, Description and Defining Characteristics.
- B. The SBHC collects, evaluates, and reports aggregate student/patient health outcomes and utilization data, student survey responses, and Youth Advisory Council/Student Health Advisory Council feedback, and uses this information in service delivery design
- C. The SBHC sponsor develops strategies and systems to support long-term financial stability, including credentialing, contracting and billing processes.
- D. SBHC staff share information about non-confidential services and coordinate care with the student's primary care provider when possible.
- E. SBHC staff coordinate and integrate efforts with existing providers and systems to optimize complementary programs, improve continuity of care, reduce fragmentation, prevent duplication, and maintain affordable services.

**5. Population-based Health Promotion: Advances health promotion and population health activities, as demonstrated by the following:**

- A. The SBHC takes advantage of its location, in or near the school, to advance effective schoolwide health promotion activities for students and community members, emphasizing prevention and early intervention.

- B. SBHC staff participate in group, classroom-based, and school-wide health promotion activities (e.g., nutrition education, trauma support groups, asthma education, fitness, and health careers) responsive to risk factors that are prevalent among students.
- C. SBHC staff deliver health education and hold events to educate youth and family members and promote health literacy.
- D. SBHC staff advance youth, family and community engagement in health promotion activities

**6. SBHCs and Schools As Partners: Develops a shared vision with the school to improve student success, as demonstrated by the following:**

- A. SBHC staff, school and district administration and school board develop a shared vision for the health center, which is communicated to all school constituencies and school personnel.
- B. The SBHC collaborates with the district employed school nurse to provide, coordinate and manage student health services, while functioning within two different systems.
- C. SBHC staff and school staff hold regular meetings, as established through a related confidentiality agreement, to discuss and address the needs of students who are struggling with attendance, behavior or other concerns impacting student success.
- D. The SBHC establishes a clear process and written protocols for school staff to refer students to the health center and for the SBHC to excuse students from class for their appointments.
- E. SBHC staff serve as a resource to school administration and staff on the selection, development and delivery of health education curricula.
- F. SBHC staff contribute to school activities and programs that promote a positive, healthy climate and school safety (e.g., school-wide health campaigns, shaping school food policies, space for physical activity, and anti-bullying policies).
- G. The SBHC serves as a partner in the management of the school's crisis prevention and intervention plans.

**7. Leadership: Demonstrates leadership in adolescent and child health by participating in local, state and national policy conversations and activities, as demonstrated by the following:**

- A. SBHC sponsors and staff engage with local, state, and national organizations that focus on adolescent and child health.
- B. SBHC sponsors and staff advocate for the resources necessary to increase access to physical, behavioral, and oral health services for adolescents and children.
- C. SBHC sponsors and staff inform elected officials, policy-makers, health professionals, educators and the community-at-large regarding the unique value, acceptability, efficiency, and convenience of the SBHC model of health care delivery.
- D. SBHC sponsors and staff form partnerships to develop stable and sustainable funding mechanisms for expanded services.
- E. SBHC sponsors and staff contribute to and stay abreast of the current body of knowledge on the health care needs of adolescents and children.
- F. SBHC sponsors and staff promote the SBHC as a training site for health care professionals.