



SBHCs + GRADS = Better Health

**Healthcare Support for Parenting Teens**

## **NMASBHC and NM-GRADS Best Practices in Collaboration with Public Health**

**Collaboration with Public Health can strengthen the support and resources provided adolescents, including expectant and parenting teens.**

### **Building a Partnership with Your Local Public Health Office**

Establishing a working partnership with your local public health office is an effective approach to providing comprehensive care for students, including expectant and parenting teens. For school-based health centers (SBHCs) that have part-time hours or are closed during the summer, the public health office can fill gaps in care when students are in need. Additionally, public health offices can help meet the needs of students when the SBHC is not able to offer services such as immunizations or sexual/reproductive health care. While many partnerships between the SBHC and public health exist informally, it is helpful to have a key point of contact. For example, some SBHCs work with the local public health office's nurse manager, family planning nurse, other or program manager.

Here are some strategies for engaging with your public health office:

- ▶ Schedule time to meet the public health office nurse manager or other key contact person; let them know your role at the SBHC, what services you provide at the SBHC and any gaps in service.
- ▶ Discuss possible opportunities for referrals to public health.
- ▶ Find out what resources or special programs the public health office has, such as the *Families First* program, and how they can support the students with whom you work.
- ▶ Ask for handouts that include information about services offered, location and telephone number; have that information available in the SBHC waiting area and exam rooms.
- ▶ Get to know what a student should expect when visiting the public health office. It can be helpful to share this information with the students whom you are referring so that they feel more at ease about the process and potentially new experience.
- ▶ Inquire about the possibility of establishing a formal partnership with public health to come to the SBHC on a regular schedule to offer services that the SBHC cannot provide such as STD testing, birth control, pregnancy testing, and immunizations.

**For more information on this and other NMASBHC Best Practice and Tip Sheets related to healthcare for expectant and parenting teens, please visit NMASBHC's website at [www.nmasbhc.org](http://www.nmasbhc.org) or contact NMASBHC at (505) 404-8059. Please note that the contents of these tip sheets are general and not a replacement for information from the sponsoring agencies or healthcare providers.**

## Sexual/Reproductive Health Services

Because not all SBHCs can provide sexual/reproductive health services, public health offices are a great referral option for adolescents where they can receive free and confidential care. This can be particularly important for expectant or parenting teens who are working to postpone or prevent a second pregnancy. Here are a few best practices that SBHCs implement to ensure the provision of sexual/reproductive health services through collaboration with public health:

- ▶ If a student expresses an interest or need for birth control during a health care visit, the SBHC provider offers the option for going to the public health office for an appointment to get birth control. If the student agrees, the SBHC clerk calls the public health office while the student is still present and schedules their appointment. Alternatively, the clerk dials the phone number to public health and has the student make the appointment. The clerk is there to provide support to the student if they are not sure what to say when making the appointment—an excellent way to engage your students and promote self-efficacy!
- ▶ For a student who may be feeling hesitant about going to the public health office, role play with the student to have them practice calling and making an appointment; this will help the student feel more comfortable calling on their own when they do feel ready.
- ▶ Always provide the student with the public health office location and phone number.
- ▶ Establish regular hours for public health to come to the SBHC to dispense birth control and provide STD and pregnancy testing. Be sure to also develop a plan for scheduling students in advance for the public health on-site clinic days.

## Immunizations

Public health often can provide immunizations for students in the event that the SBHC does not provide immunizations. This is an especially helpful resource for expectant and parenting teens, because public health may be able to provide critical immunizations to their children and families.

- ▶ Keep information in the SBHC with public health “shot clinic” events and use those events as referral source for students.
- ▶ Collaborate with public health to set up an immunization clinic day at the SBHC. Develop a plan for disseminating Vaccine Information Statements (VIS) and consent forms and scheduling students in advance of the on-site clinic day.
- ▶ Work with the GRADS case manager or teacher to assess immunization status of students enrolled in the GRADS class and refer to public health.



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