School-Based Health Centers in Georgia

School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) place critically needed services like medical, behavioral, dental, and vision care directly in schools to reduce access barriers for children, families, and school personnel.

SBHCs can quickly become self-sustainable when start-up funds are available. Currently, 17 of 49 states, and the District of Columbia, have allocated state-run funds for administering SBHC grants.

State-level funding equips SBHCs to grow and flourish. States that provide start-up funds for SBHCs have an average of 70 centers, while those that do not have an average of 30 centers.

A PROBLEM OF ACCESS: THE NEED FOR SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS

- 217,000: Children in Georgia are currently uninsured
- More than 28% of counties don’t have a licensed social worker or psychologist
- 178,000: Children in Georgia stay home sick more than 6 days a year
- 39th: Georgia’s current rank in overall child well-being

- 40% of children 3-17 have trouble accessing the mental health treatment and counseling they need

THE BENEFITS OF SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS

**Health**
- Increased access to primary, oral, and behavioral health care
- Increased use of mental health and substance abuse services
- Decreased emergency room use and hospitalization for children with asthma
- Decreased prescription drug use

**Education**
- Increased attendance and GPA for students utilizing mental health services
- Decreased drop out rates and school discipline referrals

**Cost Savings**
- Decreased cost of:
  - Pediatric health care for Medicaid, PeachCare, and private insurers
  - Emergency room use and hospitalizations
  - Pharmacy and transportation costs
  - Time away from work for parents

www.georgiavoices.org
SUCCESS IN GEORGIA

Whitefoord SBHC

- **50% reduction** in average cost per child to Medicaid for children with SBHC access
- Annual expense per Medicaid-covered child decreased from **$2,360 to $899**

Turner SBHC

- **More than 200** patient visits a month, on average
- **First in the country** to initiate Hallways to Health, a program to address childhood obesity, student emotional health and school staff wellness
- Received a state grant to:
  - **Increase** student physical activity
  - **Reduce barriers** to healthy lunches for teachers
- Offers primary care, oral health, and behavioral health

Tiger Creek SBHC

- **More than 300** patient visits a month, on average
- Open to the entire community, including adults
- Offers primary care and oral health
- Screens and refers for mental health

More than 65,000 children, families, and school personnel currently benefit from services at 47 SBHCs in Georgia.

State Funding for SBHCs

37% of states currently provide funding for SBHCs.

Grants provide another funding opportunity for SBHCs.

Current SBHC grants in Georgia:

- **NIH Grant** to study the impact and benefits of SBHCs in suburban and rural areas of Georgia
- **PARTNERS for Equity in Child and Adolescent Health**: allocates planning grants to communities in Georgia. 46 have been awarded since 2010.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN SBHCs

- Increase Federally Qualified Health Center’s capacity to include mental health services in existing school-based health centers and establish new comprehensive school-based health centers in high-need rural areas.

- Create a School-Based Health Technical Assistance Hub to facilitate communication between healthcare and education entities and coordinate investments to improve outcomes in rural communities.

Sources: [https://tinyurl.com/SBHCsga2020](https://tinyurl.com/SBHCsga2020)