Benefits of School-Based Health Centers

School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) place critically needed health-related services directly in schools to reduce access to barriers for children, families, and school personnel.¹

**SBHC**
Offers primary care services through a staffed primary care provider (e.g., nurse practitioner or physician assistant)²

**Comprehensive SBHC**
Offers primary care, behavioral health and other expanded services, including health education, dental, and vision services³

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

SBHCs have grown from two to 52 since 2013.⁴ During the 2020 legislative session, the General Assembly allocated funding to support the development of another SBHC in Irwin County.³

### THE NEED FOR SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS

- **197,000**
  - children in Georgia are currently uninsured²

- **41%**
  - of children 3-17 struggle to, or are not able to, access needed mental health treatment and counseling³

- **28%**
  - of counties don’t have a licensed social worker or psychologist²

- **146,000**
  - children in Georgia stay home sick more than 6 days a year⁵

- **47th**
  - Georgia’s rank in access to mental health care, resources, and insurance. Access is generally worse for rural communities¹⁰

- **38th**
  - Georgia’s current rank in overall child well-being¹¹

### THE BENEFITS OF SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS

**Increased:**
- Access to primary, oral, and behavioral health care
- Use of mental health and substance abuse services
- Access to the flu vaccination

**Decreased:**
- Emergency room use and hospitalization for children with asthma
- Prescription drug use

**Increased:**
- Attendance and GPA for students utilizing mental health services

**Decreased:**
- Drop out rates and school discipline referrals
- Faculty and staff absences due to illness

**Cost Savings**:¹⁸
- Emergency room use and hospitalizations
- Pharmacy and transportation costs
- Time away from work for parents
- Pediatric health care for Medicaid, PeachCare, and private insurers

[www.georgiavoices.org](http://www.georgiavoices.org)
**SUCCESS IN GEORGIA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whitefoord SBHC</th>
<th>Turner SBHC</th>
<th>Tiger Creek SBHC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>50% reduction</strong> in average cost per child to Medicaid for children with SBHC access</td>
<td><strong>More than 200</strong> patient visits a month, on average</td>
<td><strong>More than 300</strong> patient visits a month, on average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>62% reduction</strong> in annual expense per Medicaid-covered child</td>
<td><strong>First in the country</strong> to initiate Hallways to Health, a program to address childhood obesity, student emotional health, and school staff wellness</td>
<td>Open to the <strong>entire community</strong>, including adults</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Offers primary care, oral health, and behavioral health, and maintained available services throughout the community rezoning process | Received a state grant to:  
- **Increase** study physical activity  
- **Reduce barriers** to healthy lunches for teachers | 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 52 SBHCs in Georgia.

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**Funding for SBHCs**

17 states have an ongoing funding mechanism to support SBHCs.

Philanthropic partners 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.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN SBHCS**

- Increase state funding to Federal Qualified Health Centers to support the development and expansion of school-based health services throughout the state, especially in high-need, rural areas.
- Strengthen coordination and collaboration among state agencies to increase comprehensive school-based mental health programs and reduce stigma.
- Support existing efforts to create a School-Based Health Technical Assistance Hub under the Rural Health Innovation Center to facilitate communication between healthcare and education entities and coordinate investments to improve outcomes in rural communities.
Sources for Benefits of School-Based Health Centers


3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.


17 Ibid.
