

# 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.<sup>1,2</sup>

## School-Based Health Center

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

## Comprehensive School-Based Health Center

Offers primary care, behavioral health and other expanded services, including health education, dental, and vision services

## The Need for School-Based Health Centers in Georgia<sup>3,4,5,6</sup>



**176,000**

children in Georgia do not have health care coverage



**130,000**

children, on average, in Georgia stay home sick more than 6 days a year. Chronic conditions (e.g., asthma) and other health-related challenges (e.g., dental pain) are likely causes of chronic absenteeism.



**45%**

of children 3-17 struggle to, or are not able to, access needed mental health treatment and counseling

## THE BENEFITS OF SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS<sup>7</sup>

**More than 100,000** children, families, and school personnel currently benefit from services at **102** SBHCs (growing from two in 2013) in Georgia.



### Health<sup>8,9</sup>

#### 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

#### How This Looks in Georgia:

- Turner SBHC initiated Halls to Health, a program that addresses childhood obesity and student emotional health.
- Tiger Creek SBHC offers services to the entire community, including adults.
- Albany Area Primary Health Care SBHC offers eye exams and glasses to all students within the Dougherty County School System.



### Education<sup>10,11,12</sup>

#### Increased:

- Attendance and GPAs for students utilizing mental health services

#### Decreased:

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

#### How This Looks in Georgia:

- Turner SBHC prioritizes school staff wellness and utilized state grant funding to reduce barriers to healthy lunches for teachers.



### Cost Savings<sup>13</sup>

#### Decreased:

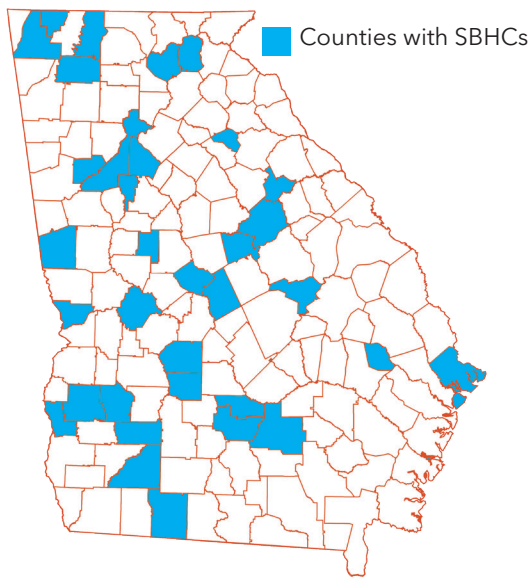
- Drop out rates and school discipline referrals
- Faculty and staff absences due to illness

#### How This Looks in Georgia:

- Whiteford SBHC reported a 50% reduction in average cost per child to Medicaid for children with SBHC access, and a 62% reduction in annual expense per Medicaid-covered child.

## Sustaining School-Based Health Centers

**SBHCs can quickly become self-sustaining when start-up funds are available. Georgia has allocated \$125 million of federal funding to support planning and startup of new SBHCs.**



### Funding for SBHCs

**17** states and Washington, D.C. have an ongoing funding mechanism to support SBHCs.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>
- **PARTNERS for Equity in Child and Adolescent Health:** allocates planning grants to communities in Georgia. 46 have been awarded since 2010.<sup>16</sup>
- **The Georgia Department of Education's Office of Whole Child Supports:** offers SBHC planning grants to expand school-based health services to rural communities<sup>17</sup>
- **Medical College of Georgia:** supports a SBHC in a middle School in Athens, GA<sup>18</sup>

### **Recommendations to Strengthen School-Based Health Centers**

- Continue to 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.
- Ensure that school-based health centers are comprehensive and facilitate access to behavioral health services.
- Ensure effective telehealth practice and outcomes, including emphasis on quality control, maintaining pandemic-related telehealth flexibilities, and provider reimbursements (e.g., insurance reimbursement for consultation and services provided via telephone, video chat, and the like).

## Sources for Benefits of School-Based Health Centers

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