

School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) and Pediatric Mental Health Care Access (PMHCA) Programs:

▶ A Natural Partnership for Improving Access to Mental Health Care

WHAT IS A PMHCA?

The Pediatric Mental Health Care Access (PMHCA) Program consists of statewide and regional networks of pediatric mental health teams that promote the integration of behavioral health into pediatric primary care settings. PMHCAs provide teleconsultation, training, technical assistance, and care coordination services for pediatric primary care and other providers to recognize pediatric mental health conditions and to diagnose, treat and refer children and adolescents with such conditions.¹

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH ALLIANCE

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022 provided additional federal funding to 49 PMHCA programs to expand to hospital emergency departments, schools, and school-based health centers. The School-Based Health Alliance is among several organizations providing technical assistance to PMHCAs with a focus on how to expand to schools and SBHCs.²

PMHCA Program Priorities:

INCREASE

the availability and accessibility of statewide or regional networks of pediatric mental health teams composed of child and adolescent psychiatrists, licensed mental health professionals, and care coordinators who will provide consultation and referral to pediatric primary care and other providers.

CONDUCT

training and provide technical assistance and care coordination support services to pediatric primary care and other providers to enable them to conduct early identification, diagnosis, and treatment of behavioral health conditions.

PROVIDE

information to pediatric providers about and assist pediatric providers in accessing pediatric behavioral clinicians.

IMPROVE

access to treatment and referral services for children and adolescents with identified behavioral health conditions through telehealth, especially those living in rural and other underserved areas.

FOCUS

on achieving health equity related to racial, ethnic, and geographic disparities in access to mental and behavioral health care, especially in rural and other underserved areas.

▶ Why Should SBHCs Partner with PMHCAs?³

Like SBHCs, PMHCAs are part of a growing national movement to expand access to quality mental health care for children and adolescents who need it most. Common goals, systems and structures, and a complementary workforce and model of care make PMHCAs and SBHCs natural partners.

ACCESSIBILITY

SBHCs place critical services, like mental health care, directly in schools; students without a medical home can receive comprehensive healthcare, regardless of ZIP code.

INTEGRATED CARE

Embedded into SBHCs are systems to identify, assess, treat, and refer students for mental health services.

STAFFING

SBHCs have on-site primary care providers who can prescribe medication.

HIGH-QUALITY CARE

SBHCs aim to provide children with quality mental health care services through evidence-based standards, performance measures, and quality improvement systems.

SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS



SUSTAINABILITY

Like FQHCs, SBHCs use sound management practices, including a billing infrastructure, financial performance metrics, and diverse funding sources.

TECHNOLOGY

Many SBHCs are actively utilizing telehealth and electronic medical records and therefore are well-equipped to access teleconsultation services.

SYSTEMS COORDINATION

Like PMHCAs, SBHCs coordinate across care systems, make referrals, and involve family members in care.

GROWING MOVEMENT

SBHCs exist in every state!

Together, PMHCAs and SBHCs can:

HELP

to address our nationwide children's mental health crisis

by getting services to young people who suffer from diagnosable and mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders but don't receive care, especially in rural and other underserved or under-resourced areas.

ADVANCE

mental health equity

by providing mental health services to students who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) or whose families have low incomes. These students are less likely to receive needed mental health care.

EXPAND

mental health workforce capacity

by providing SBHC providers with the tools and expertise to accurately assess, diagnose, and treat mental health disorders in schools.

INTERVENE

earlier

by increasing recognition and identification of mental health issues by adults (including teachers, parents/guardians, and physicians) and mitigating the profound adverse effects of untreated mental health disorders (e.g., poor academic outcomes, suicide, substance use, and unemployment in adulthood).

OVERCOME

barriers for families

accessing mental health care, including long distances to providers, lack of reliable transportation, work demands, poverty, inadequate health insurance, and high costs.

CREATE

a continuum of integrated health and mental health care

that treats the whole child and improves children's and adolescents' mental health, physical health, and educational attainment.

► For more on PMHCAs ...

PMHCA quick facts, resources, awardee videos, and a map of PMHCA Programs can be found on the HRSA website: <https://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs-impact/programs/pediatric-mental-health-care-access>

TO CONTACT A PMHCA IN YOUR STATE OR JURISDICTION:

Current contact information for PMHCAs can be found on the HRSA PMHCA awards webpage: <https://mchb.hrsa.gov/training/projects.asp?program=34>

REFERENCES:

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2. Pediatric Mental Health Care Access. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) - Maternal & Child Health Bureau (MCHB). <https://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs-impact/programs/pediatric-mental-health-care-access>
3. School-Based Health Alliance. School-Based Health Centers: 7 Core Competencies - A Framework for Excellence. School-Based Health Alliance. Published 2022. <https://www.sbh4all.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Core-Competencies-2022-final-.pdf>

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