

How to Engage with Pediatric Mental Health Care Access (PMHCA) Programs: A Worksheet for School- Based Health Centers

Introduction

School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) play a crucial role in addressing youth mental health needs through routine screening, referral, treatment, and even direct services if mental health providers are on staff. With mental and behavioral health being so connected to physical health, most staff at these centers, regardless of their position, background, or training, provide some form of mental health support for children and adolescents. Pediatric Mental Health Care Access (PMHCA) Programs offer valuable support through provider-to-provider consultations, resources, referrals, and opportunities for training and continuing education. This worksheet is designed to help SBHC staff assess whether they would benefit from connecting with their state's PMHCA program.



Who is this worksheet for? Any SBHC staff member, leader, or team interested in improving student mental and behavioral health care access in their SBHC, school, and community. The worksheet can be used internally by SBHC staff or externally with partners and stakeholders to enhance collaboration and access.

1 Step 1: Learn

Check out the resources below to familiarize yourself with PMHCA programs

The Health Resources and Services Administration Maternal & Child Health Bureau provides funding to **54 PMHCA programs** across the country, including U.S. territories, the District of Columbia, and Tribal Nations. To learn more about each individual program [click here](#).

The School-Based Health Alliance (SBHA) has provided **training and technical assistance** to PMHCA programs and SBHCs wanting to learn more about each other. SBHA created a webpage that houses a number of resources. To access the resources [click here](#).

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has a website dedicated to **learning more about PMHCA programs**. [Click here](#) to learn more about virtual events, webinars, and other important resources.

This video from AAP explains what **PMHCA programs** are and how they work — [click here](#) to watch the video.

Step 2: Explore



Would my SBHC benefit from working with a PMHCA program?



Instructions: Answer the following questions to assess if your SBHC could benefit from collaborating with a PMHCA program. These questions aim to highlight your center's existing resources and needs regarding student mental and behavioral health support to determine if working with such a program can help you meet students' needs.

1. How is your SBHC addressing the mental and behavioral health needs of your patient population?

2. What is the overall composition of your SBHC's staff?

Consider all mental and behavioral health on staff (e.g., psychiatric nurse practitioners, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers)

If employed by your sponsoring or operating organization, are your SBHC's mental and behavioral health staff able to work with SBHC patients and staff?

3. Do your SBHC nurses, medical assistants, pediatricians, or other clinical staff, etc., provide some level of mental and behavioral health support to patients (i.e., medical assistant administers MH screening tools, nurse practitioner or pediatrician work with a patient who walks into the clinic reporting feelings of stress and anxiety)? If yes, how?

4. Does your SBHC connect students and families to mental and behavioral health services in the community? If yes, how is this typically done, through a social worker, care coordinator, community health worker, etc. or something else?



5. Do you have established relationships in place for referrals to mental and behavioral health providers in the community?

- *If so, what is your referral process?*
- *If not, what are your barriers?*

6. What mental and behavioral health supports and/or initiatives does your SBHC's school or district offer (e.g., Multi-tiered Systems of Support, Universal Mental and Behavioral Health Screening, Mental and Behavioral Health Awareness Week activities)?

- *What is your involvement with the school or school district's mental and behavioral health services and/or initiatives available to your patient population?*

7. PMHCA programs can provide training and technical assistance to school-based personnel and SBHC staff. Does your staff have access to continuing education and training related to addressing youth mental and behavioral health concerns?

What are some mental and behavioral health topics that your SBHC would benefit from learning more about?

If your SBHC has access to professional development on youth mental and behavioral health, what is your SBHC providers' capacity e.g. staff, space, time?

If your SBHC has access to professional development on youth mental and behavioral health, what obstacles are preventing your team from making use of the available opportunities?

3 Step 3: Reflect and Consider

Reflecting on your responses in the previous step, would any of the following supports be helpful to your SBHC?

- Psychiatric Provider to Provider Consultation Line
- Training and Technical Assistance on Mental and Behavioral Health Concerns Among Children and Adolescents
- Connecting students and families with Resources & Referrals



If yes, please continue to steps 4 - 6. If not, thank you for taking the time to learn more about PMHCA programs and remember to check out the resources from the [AAP](#) and the [SBHA](#).

4 Step 4: Identify & Connect

Identify your state's PMHCA program through the [Health Resources and Services Administration \(HRSA\)](#) & [National Network of Child Psychiatry Access Program \(NNCPAP\)](#) maps on their respective websites.

- Determine whether your PMHCA program is working with schools: [PMHCA Program with School Expansion Awards](#)
- Identify whether your PMHCA program is working with SBHCs



There is a growing list of PMHCA programs working with SBHCs. Please reach out to SBHA at info@sbh4all.org to learn more about connecting to the PMHCA program in your state.

- ☑ Reach out to your PMHCA program regardless of whether they are working with schools or SBHCs to express interest. Go to the [HRSA Funded Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Programs](#) webpage for contact information.
 - Type state/region/territory's name in the search bar to identify your PMHCA program's project profile that includes their website, project director, contact information, and more.
 - Email your PMHCA program project director to introduce yourself, your SBHC, and interest in accessing their services.
 - *Optional: Fill out your answers to the questions in step two of this document and include it as an attachment in your initial email to your PMHCA program so that they can learn a little more about you and the services that you provide.*

Additional Resources

- National Network of Child Psychiatry Access Programs: [Map](#) — [NNCPAP National Network of Child Psychiatry Access Programs](#)
- School Mental Health Quality Guide: [Needs-Assessment-&-Resource-Mapping.pdf \(schoolmentalhealth.org\)](#).
- Building the Infrastructure for School-based care Coordination: A Start-Up Guide
- [Health Care and School Partnerships](#)

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