

Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Outreach Toolkit for Working with School-Based Health Centers



Purpose of the Outreach Toolkit:

This Outreach Toolkit promotes and facilitates Pediatric Mental Health Care Access programs engagement and collaboration with school-based health centers.

It includes:

- Suggested practices
- Samples of services provided
- Sample workflows/algorithms for how services can be implemented in school-based health centers
- Explicit linkages between service providers
- Lessons learned
- Examples from the field
- Strategies to connect with school-based health centers in states with and without State Affiliates and/or State Program Offices

Background:

In response to the crisis of increased mental health concerns for children, ongoing disparities of access to psychiatric services, and a shortage of child and adolescent psychiatrists in the United States, the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022 provided federal funding to 49 Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, **Pediatric Mental Health Care Access (PMHCA)** programs for expansion into additional settings. These settings include emergency departments, schools, and school-based health centers (PMHCA, 2024).

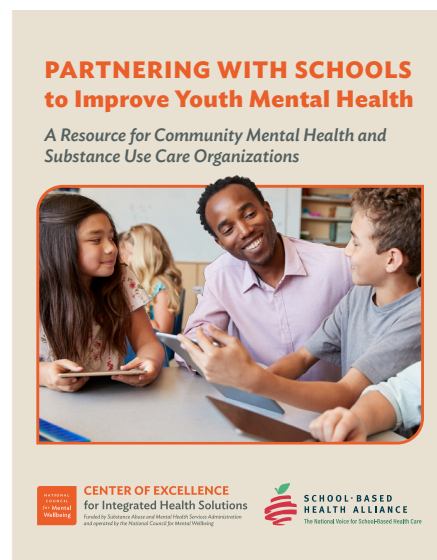
The **School-Based Health Alliance** was one of several organizations funded under the

Health Resources and Services Administration to provide technical assistance to PMHCA programs, focusing on building PMHCA program capacity to work in school settings and, in particular, to collaborate with school-based health centers. This Outreach Toolkit focuses on best practices for PMHCA programs expanding to and collaborating with school-based health centers—a setting where the need for integrated mental health services is escalating exponentially.

WHY SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS?

Mental health care for children and adolescents is a nationwide health care concern. In 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics and several other pediatric health organizations declared a national emergency for children’s mental health, and a 2022 *JAMA Pediatrics* article highlights findings showing significant increases in the percentage of children diagnosed with mental health conditions.

Pediatric health professionals need support to meet the overwhelming demand for youth mental health care, and school-based health center providers are at the forefront. They work where children and adolescents spend the majority of their days—in schools—providing an ideal connection to services and support.



About School-Based Health Centers

School-based health centers advance health equity for children and adolescents who experience barriers to accessing care by providing primary, behavioral, oral, and vision care where youth spend most of their time – at school.

Schools and community healthcare organizations form partnerships and their staffs collaborate to open and sustain school-based health centers. The care provided in school-based health centers complements but does not replace or duplicate existing school health services. It results in improved health outcomes and health literacy for students, school staff, and the community, and contributes to positive education outcomes, including reduced absenteeism, decreased disciplinary actions and suspensions, and improved graduation rates.

The Community Preventive Services Task Force convened by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends school-based health centers as an evidence-based model that improves educational and health outcomes.

In 2023, School-Based Health Alliance worked with the National Council for Mental Wellbeing to develop [a guide to promote community mental health organizations’ collaboration with schools and school-based health centers](#).

HOW?

RESEARCH: Find school-based health centers in your PMHCA Region

- Check out the map in the section below for a general overview.

The National Census of School-Based Health Centers

For over 20 years, the School-Based Health Alliance has been reporting on the growth and evolution of school-based health centers. The 2022 census includes information on school-based health centers’ sponsoring and partner organizations, schools with access, funding and revenue source(s), services and staffing, and sustainability activities.

- Review School-Based Health Alliance [National Census of school-based health centers](#).
- Use School-Based Health Alliance [Children’s Health and Education Mapping Tool](#) to locate specific school-based health centers using various location, health, and education data filters.
- Contact School-Based Health Alliance State Affiliates and School-based Health Centers Program Offices, where available, to connect with local school-based health centers.

The Children’s Health and Education Mapping Tool

The [Children’s Health and Education Mapping Tool](#) “uses a Geographic Information System to identify areas in the United States where disparities in child health, education, socioeconomic status, health delivery systems, and other key indicators exist in order to develop data-informed strategies to expand school-based health services. This tool layers data traditionally reported in separate silos and allows the user to view it at a local, state, and national level. By providing this comprehensive landscape, this tool empowers communities to identify existing resources and create new connections between stakeholders” (School-Based Health Alliance, 2021).

CONNECT: Engage in Outreach and Promotion Efforts

PMHCA programs already discovered a range of **lessons learned** for effective outreach and promotion strategies to use with pediatric providers. As the programs have expanded to school-based health center provider groups, they learned to modify their approaches and add to their existing strategies in several ways:

- Investing in relationships and learning about school-based health centers (i.e., not coming in as an outside experts with ways to “fix” things)
- Including school-based health center representatives, such as state affiliate leaders, in PMHCA program advisory groups. Their insights are valuable for identifying school-based health centers with the greatest needs and the strongest potential for collaboration
- Holding initial meetings with school-based health center leaders to understand capacity broadly
- Using information from meetings and needs assessments to define and articulate PMHCA program value to the school-based health center audience
- Developing brand marketing and educational materials specific to the school-based health center audience (e.g., virtual presentation, infographic, posters, in-person visits to school-based health centers with PMHCA program-branded items such as water bottles, magnets, and pens)
- Please **see the sample flyer template included in this outreach toolkit** for ideas and the [YAP-P flyer](#), an example from the field.
- Setting up an exhibit table and networking with providers at a statewide school-based health center conference



- Inviting school-based health centers to existing PMHCA program training events and disseminating existing materials to school-based health centers
- Using face-to-face methods of communication and scheduling in-person, phone, or video calls instead of emails
- Expanding outreach to include school-based health centers, their convening organizations, and other key stakeholders

COLLABORATE: Establish Ongoing Collaboration and Partnerships

PMHCA programs have begun to connect with school-based health centers and their stakeholders in ways ranging from informal collaboration to more formal partnerships. These partnerships often result from initial engagement activities and build the capacity and reach of PMHCA programs for school-based health centers.

Examples of PMHCA program collaboration and partnership with school-based health centers:

- School-Based Health Alliance State Affiliate organization serving on the PMHCA program **advisory board**
- Co-sponsorship with School-Based Health Alliance State Affiliate of **professional development events** for school-based health centers
- Joint **outreach efforts** to school-based health centers with the School-Based Health Center State Program Office
- **Strategy meetings** with state mental health agencies about mental health services in school-based health centers
- Collaboration with a university on **grant application** support for school-based health centers
- Subcontract with a research institution for the **evaluation of school-based health center** engagement
- Collaboration with statewide mental health supervisors on **school-based health center mental health needs assessment**

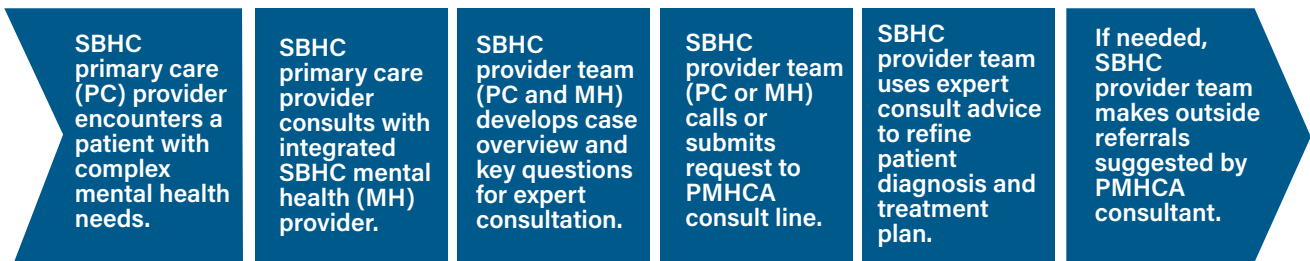
Examples of services PMHCA can provide to school-based health centers:

- **Consultation**
 - ▶ Many PMHCA programs offer their current peer-to-peer teleconsultation model (i.e., support and recommendations from the consulting provider in real time) to eligible providers at school-based health centers, as they do for their other sites. This connection builds the provider’s capacity in the school-based health center while increasing access to expert recommendations.
- **Training and education**
 - ▶ Identifying the training needs of school-based health center staff has helped PMHCA programs tailor content to the unique needs of each school-based health center. PMHCA programs can gather this information through a formal needs assessment, annual provider surveys, informal outreach, etc. PMHCA programs have also found School-Based Health Alliance State Affiliates and school-based health center program Offices helpful in informing them about training initiatives and curating school-based health center training offerings that align with their area’s education plans or needs.

- **Resource and referral**

- ▶ Historically, PMHCA programs have built their programs by establishing a consultation line, offering training, and adding resources and referrals as the program becomes more established. PMHCA programs have yet to make significant adaptations to their resource and referral service model to meet the unique needs of school-based health centers, as they anticipate that their existing resource services can benefit school-based health center providers. Collaborating with school-based health center teams to tailor resources to meet patient needs will be an essential next step.

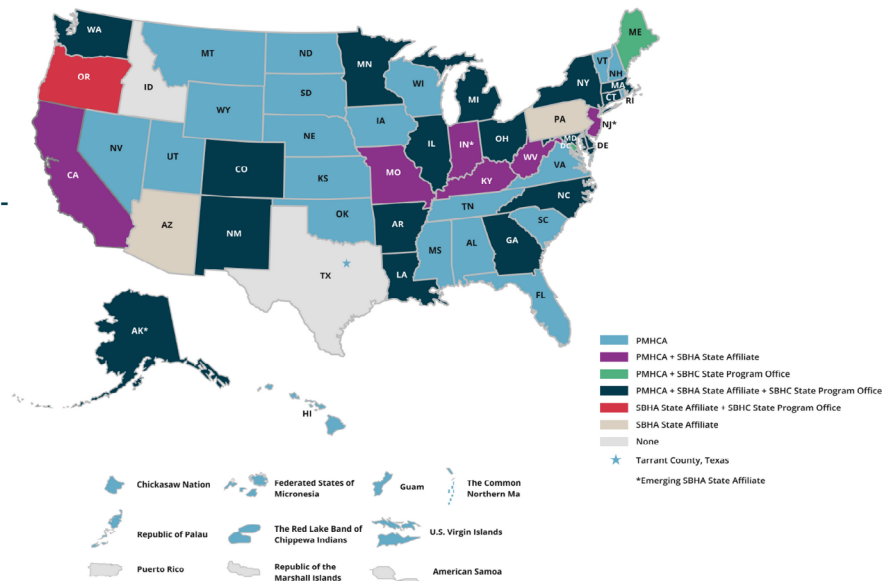
Sample workflow and provider linkages for School-Based Health Center staff utilizing a PMHCA program:



WHERE?



Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Network and School-Based Health Care



Note: PMHCA programs were identified by the [HRSA Map](#).

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Key terms:

State Program Office: School-Based Health Alliance works with 19 State Program Offices, which are the regulatory bodies in states with state-supported school-based health centers. School-Based Health Alliance and the state collaborate on data collection and reporting, performance measures, and training and technical assistance.

School-Based Health Alliance State Affiliate: School-Based Health Alliance collaborates with 23 State Affiliates and 3 Emerging Affiliates. School-Based Health Alliance and affiliates work to advance policy, quality, funding opportunities, and training and bring awareness to the school-based health center model as an evidence-based model for increasing equity in health care for school-age youth.

Emerging School-Based Health Alliance State Affiliate: Some states are in the early phases of bringing stakeholders together to represent the interests of school-based health centers and are not fully affiliated but are considered Emerging Affiliates, moving toward affiliation. Other states do not yet possess the infrastructure to become active and sustainable State Affiliates, but they want to participate in the conversation and the efforts. Whether or not their state is an Emerging Affiliate or an Affiliate, Emerging Affiliates and leaders of other state school-based health centers are welcome to collaborate in the State Affiliate Network.

Content for this Outreach Toolkit was derived from School-Based Health Alliance's resource

“PMHCA and School-Based Health Alliance: Lessons and Insights from the Field.”

For this and other resources on how PMHCA can partner with school-based health centers, please visit

[School-Based Health Alliance's PMHCA initiative page.](#)

For further information, please access the following resources:

School-Based Health Alliance:

<https://www.sbh4all.org/>

HRSA PMHCA:

<https://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs-impact/programs/pediatric-mental-health-care-access>

References

- 1 American Academy of Pediatrics. (2021). *AAP-AACAP-CHA declaration of a national emergency in child and adolescent mental health*. <https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/child-and-adolescent-healthy-mental-development/aap-aacap-cha-declaration-of-a-national-emergency-in-child-and-adolescent-mental-health/>
- 2 National Network of Child Psychiatry Access Programs. (2024, March 15). *Child psychiatry access programs in the United States*. <https://www.nncpap.org/map>
- 3 McBain, R.K., Cantor, J.H., Kofner, A., Stein, B.D., & Yu, H. (2022). Ongoing disparities in digital and in-person access to child psychiatric services in the United States. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 61(7), 926–933. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2021.11.028>
- 4 School-Based Health Alliance. (2023). *The national census of school-based health centers*. <https://www.sbh4all.org/reports-and-data/>
- 5 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2022). *New HHS Study in JAMA Pediatrics shows significant increases in children diagnosed with mental health conditions from 2016 to 2020*. <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2022/03/14/new-hhs-study-jama-pediatrics-shows-significant-increases-children-diagnosed-mental-health-conditions-2016-2020.html>
- 6 National Council for Mental Wellbeing & SBHA. (2023). *Partnering with schools to improve youth mental health: A resource guide for community mental health and substance use care organizations*. https://sbh4all.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/PartneringwithSchoolstoImproveYouthMental-Health_2023-final.pdf
- 7 Health Resources and Services Administration. (2024, March). *Pediatric mental health care access program (PMHCA): Improving behavioral health services*. <https://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs-impact/programs/pediatric-mental-health-care-access>
- 8 School-Based Health Alliance. (2023). *Pediatric Mental Health Care Access (PMHCA) Programs and School-Based Health Centers (School-Based Health Alliance): A natural partnership for improving mental health care*. <https://sbh4all.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/PMHCA-Programs-and-SBHCs-A-Natural-Partnership-for-Improving-Access-to-Mental-Health-Care-2023.09.29.pdf>
- 9 School-Based Health Alliance. (n.d.). The School-Based Health Alliance child health and education mapping tool. <https://data.sbh4all.org/sbhadb/maps/>

Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Programs



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A 2022 *JAMA Pediatrics* article [highlights findings showing significant increases in the percentage of children diagnosed with mental health conditions.](#)

Pediatric health professionals need support to meet the overwhelming demand for youth mental health care, and school-based health center providers are at the forefront.

How?

[Pediatric Mental Health Care Access programs](#) operate free consultation lines for pediatric health professionals to access expert psychiatric consultation.

During each call, experts assess the patient's situation, recommend treatment options, and refer to specialists as needed.

This builds the provider's capacity in the school-based health center, increasing access to expert recommendations and promoting effective care.

Who?

What?

Pediatric Mental Health Care Access (PMHCA) programs help pediatric health professionals with free, expert psychiatric consultation, training, resources, and referrals to support child and adolescent mental health care needs.

Professionals working in school-based health centers (SBHCs) who focus on equitable access to care for young people are an excellent fit for Pediatric Mental Health Care Access support.

Why?

Mental health care for children and adolescents is a nationwide health care concern. In 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics and several other pediatric health organizations [declared a national emergency for children's mental health.](#)

Where?

For more information, please contact: