

District of Columbia Expanded School-Based Health Programs

In spring 2017, the District of Columbia released new plans to expand school health and behavioral health services to schools across the city. The Department of Behavioral Health's (DBH) School Mental Health Program and the Department of Health's (DOH) School Health Services Program will both be implemented throughout the 2017-2018 school year.

The new programs focus on the preventative and chronic health needs of students, continuous care in all schools, and maximizing community resources to improve overall academic and health outcomes. The programs offer consistent services across all schools with room to personalize based on individual school health needs.

What will change under the new school-based health programs?

School Mental Health Program

The program will expand school-based behavioral health services to every DC Public School and Public Charter School by using all behavioral health resources available in the District. DBH clinicians will provide prevention support and mental health screening services to all students while community-based organizations will partner with individual schools to provide on-site behavioral health treatment as needed.

School Health Services Program

The program will allow each school with a health suite to be staffed for 40 hours per week. Most schools will continue to receive full-time health suite coverage from a DOH nurse. Schools that have had less than 40 hours of nurse coverage per week in the past will now also have an allied health professional (certified nursing assistants or health care technicians) to cover the health suite for the remaining hours. The nurse will remain the main point of contact for school health services and will lead the coordination of care for all students to proactively ensure all students' preventive and chronic health needs are met.

How will my child's school be impacted?

School Mental Health Program

The program offers a range of services to every school, from screening and prevention to early intervention and intensive treatment. Each school will receive prevention support and mental health screening services from DBH clinicians, who will work with parents to connect children to services as needed. Additional mental health services will be provided based on student need identified by school leaders and the school's mental health team, consisting of DBH staff, school personnel and community-based providers.

School Health Services Program

A proposed DOH staffing plan is available for each school. The staffing plans are based on student health needs as of March 2017. The School Health Services Program is flexible, and staffing will change to accommodate changes in student health needs. Health suite coverage by nurses is subject to the overall nurse vacancy rate as well as nurse absences. Recruitment efforts are underway to hire more nurses as the region faces a nurse shortage, and nurse float pools will be used to help address daily nurse absences. Nurses will first be deployed to schools with students who have daily or acute needs, such as those who require insulin or may require seizure medication and students who receive a treatment such as a tube feeding. There are currently enough nurses to meet these immediate needs.



When will the new school-based health programs be implemented?

School Mental Health Program

The School Mental Health Program will be implemented in phases, giving students, schools, and providers time to successfully transition to the expanded services during the 2017-2018 school year.

School Health Services Program

Each school's staffing plan under the School Health Services Program will be implemented at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year and evaluated as needed throughout the year.

How will the new school-based health programs continue to evolve?

Ongoing assessment of the new programs and feedback based on students' experience of care is integral to the success of each program. DBH and DOH will continuously work with education and community-based health partners to monitor the new programs for quality and satisfaction, and will solicit feedback from schools, families and students.

How can I learn more and share my feedback?

DBH and DOH will hold three parent engagement sessions throughout June.

Date: Thursday, June 8

Time: 6:00-7:00pm

Location: Shaw Neighborhood Library, WTD Meeting Room, 1630 7th St NW

Date: Wednesday, June 14

Time: 6:00-7:00pm

Location: Alice Deal Middle School, 3815 Fort Dr NW

Date: Thursday, June 29

Time: 6:00-7:00pm

Location: Anacostia Neighborhood Library, Ora Glover Community Room, 1800 Good Hope Rd SE

Families, students and school leaders can also communicate their questions and comments about the programs at any time by emailing shs.program@dc.gov.

To view the full plans outlining the new school-based health programs, visit

<https://dmhhs.dc.gov/publication/school-mental-health-program-and-school-health-services-program>.