

Interdisciplinary Practice

Purpose and Relevance

The purpose of this policy statement is to promote interdisciplinary practice within school-based health centers (SBHCs) and to confirm that mutual respect and coordination of care between school-based health center staff and other health professionals practicing in schools, including nurses, nutritionists as well as mental health and other counseling professionals are essential to the provision of health care in schools. The importance of interdisciplinary and collaborative practice as a means to promote the health and safety of students is supported by the seven basic principles of the School-Based Health Alliance.

Position Statement

Despite the challenges of our different disciplines, sponsors, histories, and practice guidelines, interdisciplinary collaborative efforts are the bedrock of the quality care that our students deserve. These collaborative efforts must have at least four hallmarks:

- The school health and counseling staff, as well as the school faculty, parents and other school staff, will participate in assessing student needs in preparation for opening a school-based health center;
- Basic information such as the location of the center, its hours of operation, its referral policies, its scope of services, and the integration of the health center within the school community will be outlined in memoranda of understanding;
- The institutional sponsors for school-based health centers will promote collegiality and collaboration with partner agencies and among the interdisciplinary staff; and
- School administration and school-based health center managers will work to build teams that share measurable objectives and are mutually accountable.

These characteristics of a collaborative school-based practice reflect the core beliefs of school-based health centers:

- The centers are dedicated to supporting students, the school, and the community;
- SBHCs are committed to the principle that health care in schools should be delivered by qualified and appropriately licensed or certified professionals;
- Communication among all health disciplines should be mutually respectful; and
- SBHC staff, together with other school-based health providers, will commit to fairly and fully implement written agreements for service delivery and resolve that misunderstandings or differences be addressed by parties within the school building.

Providing comprehensive health care in schools to children and youth presents both unique opportunities and challenges. Collegiality, mutual respect, maintaining focus on the common goal and, most importantly, a sense of humor will go a long way to achieving coordination of services.