



## School-Based Health Centers Make Sense: Ensuring all kids have access to the health care they need to be healthy and safe, and to do their best in school

School-based health centers (SBHCs) are an innovative and effective way to address California’s severe health care access problem among children. By providing critical health care services to kids in school, SBHCs ensure children get the medical, mental health, and dental care they need to be healthy and safe, and to support their ability to learn. It’s clear that learning and good health are entwined: education outcomes improve along with the health of students. For these and other reasons outlined in this brief, offering health services to children where they are – at school – just makes sense.

### It’s good for all Californians when children do well in school, but...

- It’s harder for kids to learn if they are sick, can’t see the chalkboard clearly, or are emotionally troubled.
- Children’s ability to learn also suffers if they don’t have health insurance coverage and access to care.
- If kids can’t do their best in school, it impacts not only the well-being of children, but also of families and communities.

### We all win when kids get the care they need, but...

- Over one million California children lack health insurance coverage and many others don’t have access to health care providers.
- If kids don’t have easy access to health care, they are less likely to receive preventative services and more likely to miss school due to asthma, dental problems, and illness.
- When chronic conditions go untreated, kids are more likely to end up in hospital emergency rooms.

“When we look at our limited resources and the immense challenge of meeting the needs of all families, we need to be smart, innovative, and efficient. School-based health centers fit the bill.”

– John Gioia  
Board of Supervisors  
Contra Costa County

“My school health center is important to me because it shows that the school really does care about the students and is concerned about their safety. Knowing that you have a back up should be a relief to everyone.”

– Erica  
9th Grade Student

“I am forever grateful to his teacher, the school-based health center, and the school for helping Kenny improve his grades and turn his life around. They not only helped him, they helped our whole family.”

– Gloria  
Parent of a Middle-School Student

## California's school-based health centers are changing kids' lives

- SBHCs bring community resources to schools so that health issues are not barriers to learning.
- Currently, California's 200 SBHCs serve roughly 210,000 K-12 students in locations as far north as Del Norte and as far south as San Diego.
- SBHCs provide a range of health services that often include primary care, dental care, vision screenings, and mental health services.
- SBHCs build upon what school nurses do by providing some basic services and referring kids in need to other health care providers in the community.

## School-based health centers work

- SBHC users are likely to utilize primary care services and get medical and dental check-ups.
- Access to and use of an SBHC are associated with fewer emergency room visits and hospitalizations.
- SBHCs deliver services to reduce obesity and prevent the onset of Type II diabetes.
- Asthma sufferers miss less school when they use SBHCs.
- SBHC users improve their grades more quickly than their peers and reduce their disciplinary referrals.

### Learn more

Children Now is the leading, nonpartisan, multi-issue research, policy development, and advocacy organization dedicated to promoting children's health and education in California and creating national media policies that support child development. The organization is spearheading The Children's Movement of California, the new collective force for change kids so clearly need. Visit [www.childrennow.org](http://www.childrennow.org).

**CH1LDREN NOW**

California School-Based Health Alliance improves the health and academic success of children and youth by advancing health services in schools. Visit [www.schoolhealthcenters.org](http://www.schoolhealthcenters.org).

