



# BENEFITS OF SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS

School-based health centers (SBHCs) place critically-needed health-related services directly in schools to reduce access to barriers for children, families, and school personnel.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## THE NEED FOR SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS IN GEORGIA<sup>3, 4, 5, 6</sup>

**166,000**  
children  not have  
health care coverage

**212,015**  
children, on average, stay  
home more  6 days a year

**46.7%**  
of children, ages  3-17, had  
difficulty obtaining or were unable  
to obtain mental health care

## What are the benefits of school-based health centers?<sup>7</sup>

More than **100,000** children, families, and school personnel benefit from services at **129** SBHCs in Georgia. There are another 22 SBHCs pending.



### National Health Data Supports<sup>8</sup>

#### Increase in:

- Access to primary, oral, and behavioral health care
- Use of mental health and substance abuse services
- Access to the flu vaccination

#### Decrease in:

- Emergency room use and hospitalization for children with asthma

### Local Data and Implementation in Georgia<sup>9, 10</sup>

- Turner and Lake Forest SBHC implement **Halls to Health**, a program that addresses childhood obesity, student emotional health, and staff wellness
- Tiger Creek and Taliaferro SBHC, and several others, offers services to the entire community, including adults
- Albany Area Primary Care SBHC offers eye exams and glasses to all students within the Dougherty County School System
- Lake Forest, Turner, and Tiger Creek SBHCs provide preventative services and asthma management



### National Education Data Supports<sup>11, 12</sup>

#### Increase in:

- Attendance and GPAs for students utilizing mental health services

#### Decrease in:

- Drop out rates and school discipline referrals
- Faculty and staff absences due to illness

### Local Data and Implementation in Georgia<sup>13, 14, 15</sup>

- Turner SBHC prioritizes state grant funding to reduce barriers to healthy lunches for teachers
- Lake Forest SBHC resulted in a 40% increase in seat time after the first year. The length of time that students were absent due to illness decreased as well
- Health and support services also provided to school staff to increase their attendance and instruction time



### National Data Shows Cost Savings<sup>16, 17</sup>

- Emergency room use and hospitalizations
- Pharmacy and transportation costs
- Time away from work for parents
- Pediatric health care for Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids, and private insurers

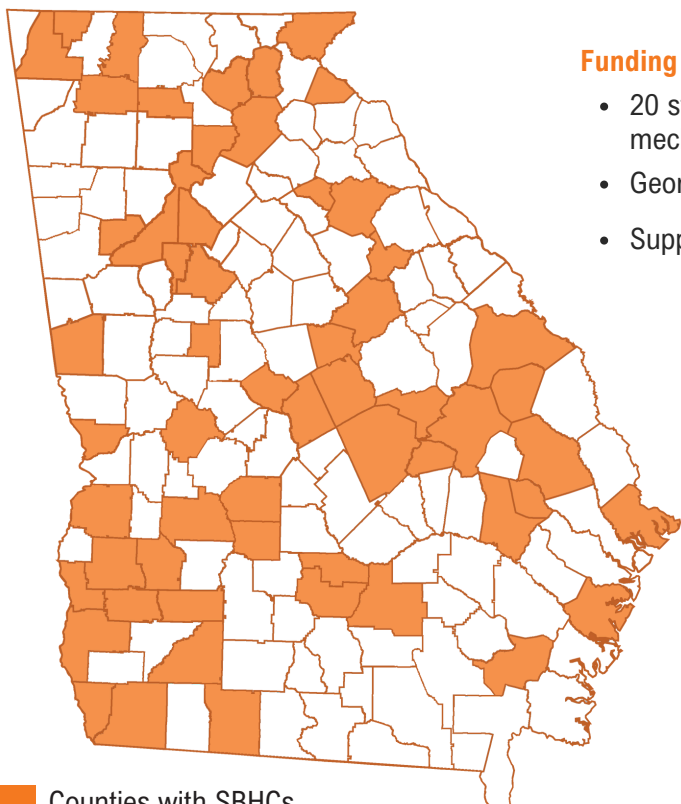
### Local Data and Implementation in Georgia<sup>18</sup>

- Whitefoord SBHC reported a 50% reduction in average cost per child to Medicaid for children with SBHC access, and a 62% reduction in annual expense per Medicaid-covered child

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## Sustaining School-based Health Centers

School-based health centers can become self-sustaining when startup funds are available. Georgia has allocated \$125 million of federal funding to support planning and startup of new SBHCs.



### Funding for SBHCs

- 20 states and Washington, D.C. have an ongoing funding mechanism to support SBHCs. [19](#)
- Georgia's share of federal SBHC funding
- Support for SBHCs in Georgia includes:
  - Governor's funding resulted in the creation of 15 new SBHCs with 19 additional centers opening during the 25-26 school year
  - **National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants** study the impact and benefits of SBHCs in suburban and rural areas of Georgia.
  - **PARTNERS for Equity in Child and Adolescent Health** allocates planning grants to communities in Georgia. 48 have been awarded since 2010.
  - **Georgia Department of Education's Whole Child Supports** offers SBHC planning grants to expand school-based health services to rural communities. June 2023 Round 1 funding resulted in 8 grantees; to date there are 29 planning grants
  - **Medical College of Georgia** supports a SBHC in a middle school in Athens, Georgia.

## TYPES OF SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS

### School-based Health Center

These centers offer primary care services through a staffed primary care provider (e.g., nurse practitioner, physician assistant).

### Comprehensive School-based Health Center

These centers offer primary care, behavioral health, and other expanded services, including health education, dental, and vision services.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS

- Continue to increase state and federal funding for medical sponsorship (FQHC and non-FQHC) to support the development and expansion of school-based health services throughout the state, especially in high-need, rural areas.
- Promote the integrated mental health and primary care model into SBHCs.
- Utilize telemedicine as an adjunct to the comprehensive primary care services within the SBHC model (i.e., hub spoke).
- Obtain parent consent to ensure their participation in medical decision-making within the SBHC model.
- Galvanize community support to educate and increase public will for SBHCs.

SCAN BELOW TO SEE  
FACTSHEET CITATIONS

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