



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.^{1, 2}

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 or 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.

Why do we need school-based health centers?^{3,4,5,6}

166,000

children in Georgia do not have health care coverage

138,345

children, on average, in Georgia stay home more than 6 days a year

46.7%

of children, aged 3-17, had difficulty obtaining or were unable to obtain mental health care

What are the benefits of school-based health centers?⁷

More than 100,000 children, families, and school personnel currently benefit from services at 117 SBHCs (up from two in 2013) in Georgia.



Health^{8,9}

Increased:

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

Decreased:

- Emergency room use and hospitalization for children with asthma
- Prescription drug use

How this looks in Georgia:

- 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 offers services to the entire community, including adults.
- Albany Area Primary Health Care SBHC offers eye exams and glasses to all students within the Dougherty County School System.



Education^{10,11,12,13}

Increased:

- Attendance and GPAs for students utilizing mental health services

Decreased:

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

How this looks in Georgia:

- 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.



Cost Savings^{14,15}

Decreased:

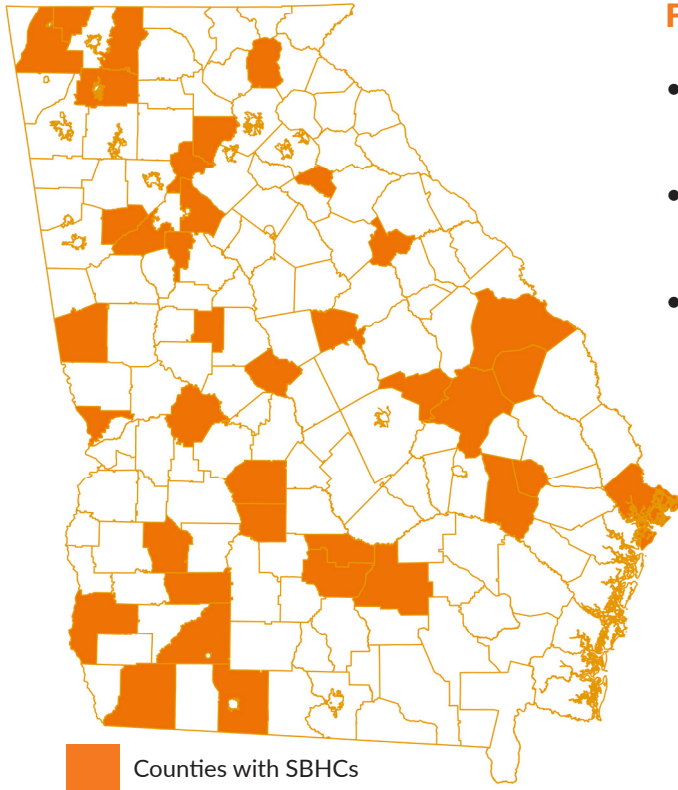
- Emergency room use and hospitalizations
- Pharmacy and transportation costs
- Time away from work for parents
- Pediatric health care for Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids®, and private insurers

How this looks in Georgia:

- Whiteford 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.

Sustaining School-based Health Centers

School-based health centers can quickly 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

- 17 states and Washington, D.C. have an ongoing funding mechanism to support SBHCs.¹⁶
- Philanthropic partners provide another funding opportunity for SBHCs.
- Support for SBHCs in Georgia includes:
 - **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 Office of 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.
 - **Medical College of Georgia** supports a SBHC in a middle school in Athens, Georgia.

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).
- Ensure parent consent/participation in medical decision-making within the SBHC model.



References for Benefits of School-Based Health Centers

Suggested citation: Voices for Georgia's Children. (2023). Fact Sheet: Benefits of School-based Health Centers. Voices for Georgia's Children. <https://adobe.ly/3uyaQVY>.

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