



NEW MEXICO

ALLIANCE FOR
SCHOOL-BASED
HEALTH CARE

Redefining Health for Kids and Teens

Guidance for New Mexico School-Based Health Centers for 2020-2021 School Reopening/Reentry

Released on July 20, 2020

*NMASBHC intends for this to be a living document; all future revisions will have a new date of release.
Guidance is subject to change based on public health orders and official state agency directives.*

Introduction

With school closures due to COVID-19, New Mexico children and adolescents missed over three months of in-person school in the spring of 2020. For many who rely on school-based health centers (SBHCs), and with limited access to health care in the community during the pandemic, this means months of untreated chronic illness, missed preventive care visits and required vaccinations, and compounded unmet mental health needs. Many students and staff will return to school with the added stress of illness and loss of loved ones due to COVID-19, anxiety due to isolation, stressing over hybrid models, navigating distance learning, the impacts of economic instability within their families, and heightened racial trauma. These losses are compounded with reduced socialization, limits or cancellations of sports or extra-curricular activities, and a disruption in the usual excitement of returning to school. We know that COVID-19 will continue to be a threat in many communities as schools work to re-open. School-based health centers and services will play a critical, frontline role in addressing the concerns and needs of school communities as we all do our part to control further spread of the virus.

When schools reopen, SBHCs can provide preventive and routine health care that was deferred due to COVID-19, and they will continue to provide additional critical physical, behavioral health, and other healthcare services for some of New Mexico's most vulnerable youth. Healthcare providers and schools/districts must develop and maintain a collaborative effort—now more than ever—to address student and school community needs.

This guidance document was created to support and foster additional collaboration between existing SBHCs and the school communities they serve, and to encourage school districts and healthcare providers to consider new collaborations to address student needs.

In addition to planning for the safe re-entry of students, we urge you to prioritize racial equity and the social-emotional well-being of students through your SBHCs and in the support you provide to school district partners. A heightened awareness of and attention to racism, trauma and mental health will be critical, as well as diligence to measures to prevent discrimination and stigmatization surrounding COVID-19. Additional emphasis should be given to crisis response and maintaining fair discipline practices as students return to school after months of disruption in their daily routines.

About this SBHC Guidance

This resource was developed to support coordination between New Mexico school-based health centers (SBHCs) and their school district partners as schools reopen during the COVID-19 pandemic. The goals of this guidance are to:

- *encourage a unified statewide approach for coordination between SBHCs and school districts for reopening;*
- *help SBHCs and schools leverage resources to address the needs of students;*
- *help to clarify boundaries/responsibilities between schools, SBHCs, and other health partners for student and staff care as schools reopen.*

This document is intended to be used as a template for guiding local discussions. These discussions also will be informed by guidance from the New Mexico Public Education Department and Department of Health, school district and school reopening planning groups, and SBHC sponsoring agencies. Given variation in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across the state, as well as the unique local response:

- **All decisions should be made in close collaboration with local school districts and state public health authorities; and**
- **Official guidance from the New Mexico Public Education Department, current and forthcoming, can be found at: <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/reentry-district-and-school-guidance/>.**

Please do not hesitate to reach out with additional questions or needs as you collaborate in reopening your school-based health centers. Thank you for all you do to support our students in New Mexico.

*Nancy Rodriguez, Executive Director
New Mexico Alliance for School-Based Health Care (NMASBHC)
Email: nancy@nmasbhc.org*

About the New Mexico Alliance for School-Based Health Care

NMASBHC is a 501(c)3 nonprofit represents school-based health centers (SBHCs) in New Mexico and collaborates with other partners to promote, facilitate, and advocate for comprehensive, integrated, and culturally competent health care, including health education, in schools.

Website: <https://www.nmasbhc.org>

NMASBHC is a state affiliate of the national [School-Based Health Alliance](#).

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Checklist of Considerations for New Mexico School-Based Health Centers: Planning for the 2020-2021 School Year

Note: NMASBHC recommends initiating internal conversations at SBHC sponsoring agencies to determine the limits of services, including limits of financial resources, SBHCs can agree to prior to coordination meetings with school district partners, including limits of financial resources.

Coordination & Collaboration with School District Partners

- If you have not already, ask to be included in the reopening stakeholder group and any asset mapping.
 - Discuss expected SBHC services, staffing and operational hours to address new and increased needs this upcoming year. Consider SBHC operations:
 - outside of typical school year;
 - outside of typical hours, i.e., before and after school, hours via telehealth;
 - with staggered days to match possible cohort attendance (e.g. different students attending Mon/Tues than Thru/Fri);
 - during particular class periods to reduce impact to in-person instruction;
 - for prioritized populations (e.g. parenting teens, students with chronic illness or disabilities); and
 - impact on access to school buildings and services.
 - Coordinate messaging around safety of returning to school and accessing SBHC services.
 - Watch for state (DOH/PED/Governor's Office) guidance on testing and surveillance for school employees.
 - Watch for state (DOH/PED/Governor's Office) guidance on processes for screening of students.
 - Collaborate early and often with school administrators, school nurses and school wellness teams. Needs that may be considered include:
 - Coordination in physical space if SBHC and school nurse are co-located;
 - Consider SBHC and School Nurse offices to be designated as "well" areas;
 - Designate a joint "sick" area to reduce possible spread of illness; and
 - Determine protocol for managing general upper respiratory and gastro-intestinal complaints given that they can be COVID-19 symptoms.
 - School health services staffing and schedule changes or adjustments;
 - Vaccine compliance, Asthma Action Plans, student referrals and care coordination; and
 - Behavioral health services as a restorative justice practice and alternative to discipline.
 - Clarify health and safety protocols, physical facilities and roles regarding COVID-19 within the school.
 - Determine whether SBHC will assist with protocols related to screening and/or assessing symptoms of COVID-19, including processes for isolation of symptomatic individuals – both those that present via school screening processes and those that are discovered in an SBHC appointment.
 - Determine whether SBHC will assist in establishment and monitoring of school cleaning and sanitizing procedures.
 - Consider collaborating on developing a decision tree about screening, testing and follow-up of symptomatic persons on campus.
 - Determine whether SBHC sponsoring agency will support school staff and school nurses with medical supplies such as PPE and thermometers.
 - Review/Update any changes to lease, MOU, or other agreements between district and SBHC.

- Determine health priorities to address student needs.
 - Given the lapse in care many students will have experienced throughout school closures and COVID-19, discuss with school partners what the SBHC should prioritize. For example:
 - Immunizations (staff and students);
 - Mental health screening and treatment (staff and students);
 - Reproductive health (consider LARC in case of subsequent school closures);
 - Chronic disease management;
 - EPSDTs/sports physicals; and
 - Asthma management, particularly if cleaning/disinfecting processes/products are triggers.
- Discuss who can receive your school-based health services and if it changes given COVID-19
 - Students only, Students and Staff, Siblings, Community members, etc.
- Review plans for addressing suspected COVID-19 cases of students or staff.
 - Determine if the SBHC program will assist in the determination of suspected cases of COVID-19 or provide a space for student isolation.
 - Consider coordinating resources for isolation. Empty classrooms can be converted to negative pressure spaces with a sealed door and a fan on an open window.
 - Consider location of an isolation room. Isolation rooms may be best placed at an Entrance/Exit to avoid the patient walking throughout the school.
 - Clarify school's response and communication plan in the event of a COVID-19 case in the school.
 - Who is notified? Make sure response complies with FERPA and HIPPA privacy laws.
 - If a possible COVID case presents to SBHC: What is your protocol? Is there consent? Do you charge Insurance? Who is notified? Who is responsible for contact tracing?
 - If a staff member tests positive: Who pays? Who is notified? Who does contact tracing?
- Determine whether SBHC will partner to provide education for school staff on the symptoms and prevention of COVID-19 as well as how to talk to students about the virus.
 - Help to provide education on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, when students should be sent to the nurse's office, SBHC, DOH, PCP, other local health provider, and precautions to take.
 - Direct staff to the online resource available through [Head to Toe 365](#) (session, "[Helping Children and Teenagers Thrive During COVID-19: Tips for Parents, Teachers and Counselors](#)").
- Determine whether SBHC will partner to provide education for students about prevention of COVID-19.
- Review plans for students in crisis or who are suicidal.
 - Clarify the current protocol for crises.
 - Determine how or if the SBHC program will play a role to support crises.
 - See behavioral health resource links in appendices for student/school tools.
- Partner to prepare trainings on trauma-informed practices and resiliency for teachers and SBHC staff.
 - Leverage local trauma-informed practice trainings and resources to prioritize resiliency in responding to student needs.

Operations & Physical Space

- Determine if SBHC program will be testing for COVID-19 or referring to testing site.
 - If referring to testing sites, know when testing sites near your center are open and their testing criteria. Access a list of [New Mexico testing sites here](#).
 - If testing within the SBHC program, create the appropriate protocols, working closely with your sponsoring agency and school leadership.
- Create and/or adapt protocols for access to the SBHC.
 - Develop and implement screening questions and temperature check protocols for before students/patients enter the SBHC space.
 - Consider who will have access to the center, including parents, if accessing to attend an appointment with their child or to take them home.

- Consider processes to schedule appointments and use hybrid models of care (in-person and telehealth) if school is limited in face-to-face instruction. What is the process if instruction goes completely remote or on-line?
- Consider separating sick and well visits to prevent potential spread while still providing preventative and routine care. Solutions may include scheduling sick vs. well appointments for different times of the day or separating sick and well within the clinic space if possible.
- Determine whether walk-in appointments will be accepted.
- Create plans for isolation of suspected/symptomatic students. Will the SBHC provide space or isolation measures? Or will the SBHC space be considered a “well” space? Will they be moved to an isolation space? What if there are multiple people that need to be isolated?
- If screening and/or testing symptomatic students or staff for COVID-19, clarify physical space and protocols as well as mitigation strategies to keep SBHC open and safe for other services.
- If students test positive for COVID-19, determine who and how they will be cleared for return to school.
- Develop plan for social distancing of students and staff.
 - Current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends maintaining 6 feet of distance between people. Following this guidance, determine flow of traffic through the SBHC i.e., check-in, SHQs, screening, waiting for appt, provider availability, scheduling follow-up.
 - Consider a process for students to set up general appointment times and not come to clinic until they get a notification or a text. This will minimize congregating in the waiting areas.
 - Consider using tape, signs, or other markers to alert students and visitors of where to stand.
 - Consider sponsoring agency policies and protocols and how they will be adapted to school context and SBHC: signage, ventilation, infection control, PPE availability, equipment cleaning, re-use and/or disposal.
 - Consider current staffing within the SBHC space and whether altering schedules or implementing a work-from-home policy for some SBHC staff would help to maintain social distancing.
 - Consider staffing and scheduling for planned re-entry. Will students be on a hybrid model? Will they come on alternating days? How and when will follow-up be scheduled?
 - Anticipate staff absences due to COVID-19. Review staff leave policies and plans for substitute staffing.
 - Develop protocol for distancing in the workplaces. Where will staff take their breaks? Staggered or separate lunch times and spaces? Is there enough space in the front for staff? How many staff are in the exam rooms? How many staff will a patient come in contact with during an appointment?
- Evaluate the role of telemedicine in your program.
 - Consider how your program will provide telemedicine visits.
 - How is the process different if the school district is in a hybrid model?
 - Or starts or moves to fully virtual or remote?
 - Discuss with the sponsoring organization ways to support use of telehealth and remote assessments.
 - Are there devices that can be purchased to support telehealth? For example, to check ears, check throat, temperature. Can this be completed or logged remotely?
 - Consider consent processes for telemedicine visits—confirm with your organization’s legal representative what adaptations need to be made to existing consent forms.
 - Consider how you will track data from telehealth visits for SBHC patients.
 - Consider whether your screening and assessment tools can be used virtually (Note: NMDOH-contracted SBHCs may use the web-based Just Health tool; consult with Apex Inc. with questions).

- Discuss with your district leadership whether students can use technology provided by schools to access telehealth.
 - Will the sponsoring organization's IT Department be able to partner with school district's IT department to allow student to utilize technology for secure access for telehealth (e.g. turn on any plug-ins, mic/speaker, or browser capabilities necessary)?

Student and Family Needs, Outreach, Communication

- Implement systemic screening questions.
 - Important topics to screen for: abuse, domestic violence, food security, depression, anxiety, substance use, social determinants of health and racial trauma.
 - Prepare resource handouts or work with a community partner to prepare resource guides to assist families in enrolling in Medicaid and SNAP benefits.
 - Identify how SBHC will learn and stay informed of student health needs, i.e., school screenings, Just Health/Student Health Questionnaires, student health council, SBHC advisory committee, enhanced outreach, surveys, etc.
- Heighten efforts to collect signed parent/guardian consent forms.
 - Consider how to receive parental consent for medical services. Can consents be completed on-line or submitted electronically?
 - Review current process for seeing students without signed consent. If a student without consent presents with symptoms and needs to be seen right away, can they be seen? Should changes to current process be considered?
 - Ensure current contact information for new and established SBHC clients for continuity of care in case instruction models change or schools need to close.
- Communicate, in partnership with school district partners, the services offered at the school-based site and reiterate enhanced infection control measures to help assure parents/guardians it is safe for students to be seen by the SBHC program.
 - Develop combined communication plan with school leadership. Determine who communicates what and through which communication channels (e.g. school robo-calls, school mailings, the school marquee, local media, etc.).
 - Capitalize on outreach opportunities, orientations, back-to-school packets, check school calendar.
 - Consider ways of communicating with patients via patient portals, if available.
 - Post infection control protocols inside and around SBHC spaces.
- Consider posting SBHC information and updates on district website or social media platforms.
- Strengthen communication with:
 - School nurse, administrators, counselors, social workers, psychologist, family support workers, transitional supports, case managers, truancy staff, family liaison, ISS staff, school discipline, health and wellness teams, coaches, front office, community schools, and other key school staff.
 - Community-based organizations providing services students in and outside of school, including community schools coordinators/staff.
 - Student groups (e.g. student health councils, student unions, GSAs, peer educators).

Community Partnerships

- Consider participating in or developing a community-based task force to address student needs and determine what stakeholders should be present.
 - Key partners to engage may include school leadership, your Department of Health representatives, parent/teacher organization, community schools representatives, hospital/health systems, the New Mexico Activities Association, and others.

- Collaborate with school social workers, case managers, health educators and community partners to create resource referral lists (or on-site services) for students and families.
 - Clearly define roles and responsibilities of SBHC staff and school support staff as they relate to addressing student needs.
 - Critical referral resources to have ready include mental health resources, food, housing, utility assistance, and transportation and employment support/workforce development, which may be available via a community schools program.

Infection Control

- Develop or adapt written protocol for disinfecting the SBHC program space using EPA-approved cleaning products.
 - Follow your sponsoring agency guidance and protocol for cleaning and disinfecting in the SBHC space and in waiting areas.
 - Resource: [CDC Cleaning and Disinfecting Guide](#) or [EPA list of Disinfectants for COVID-19](#).
 - An alternative cleaning solution is bleach solution. Combine 1/3rd cup bleach per gallon of water.
 - Procure adequate PPE, including masks, gloves and gowns for staff and patients.
 - Educate staff and patients about use of PPE. Post instructions or infographics as reminders.
 - Check with your sponsoring agency about protocols for the conservation of PPE.
- Consider updating protocols to address asthma exacerbation without the use of a nebulizer.
 - Consider the use of MDIs (metered dose inhalers) in place of the use of a nebulizer.
 - Review protocol for nebulized medications. Nebulizers have been identified by the CDC as aerosol-generating procedure requiring an N-95 mask fitted to the healthcare worker.
 - If nebulizers are necessary, increase education efforts with patients to minimize spread.
 - Review the NMASBHC Tip Sheet on [Schools, COVID-19 and Asthma: Cleaning & Indoor Environmental Triggers](#) for cleaning considerations in regards to Asthma.
- Promote prevention of infection including handwashing in the clinic and encourage it throughout the school day.
 - Several posters/resources for educating about handwashing include the [Stop the Spread Poster](#) and [CDC Handwashing Resources](#).
- Promote education and prevention of COVID-19.
 - Posters/Resources for educating about COVID-19 and preventing spread include:
 - [NMDOH COVID-19 page](#)
 - Native American [AASTEC Fact Sheets](#)
 - [New Mexico COVID-Safe Practices](#) document
 - [CDC COVID-19 page](#)
- Information for NM SBHCs can be located on the [NMASBHC COVID-19 Information](#) page.

Appendix A SBHC Fact Sheet EXAMPLE

The School-Based Health Center is OPEN During School Reopening 2020-2021

The School-Based Health Center (SBHC) welcomes students, their families and school staff back to school! Here are some frequently-asked questions about SBHC services this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic:

What services will the SBHC be providing in 2020-2021, and how?

The school-based health center will be providing the following services as much as possible in person. We are also able to provide many services to students through telehealth (phone or computer video visits) if the school is operating with a rotating schedule or online only. Please contact us directly with specific questions about our services.

- preventive well-child care & sports physicals
- immunizations
- acute and chronic care
- sexual and reproductive health services
- mental and behavioral health counseling
- substance abuse counseling
- health education
- nutritional counseling
- oral health screening and dental care

When are you open?

We will be open starting on [XX] and our days and hours of operation are generally [XX]. Note that SBHC hours this year may depend on the school's model of instruction and any necessary changes throughout the year due to COVID-19. Again, we can provide many services to students through telehealth if the school is operating with a rotating schedule or online only. We are staying flexible to serve students and the school community to the fullest extent possible, and we will keep posted hours and contact information current (on voice-mail, etc.) as any changes occur.

Is it safe to visit the SBHC? What can my student expect when they come to the SBHC this year?

The SBHC is following all school district, public health and [sponsoring agency] health and safety requirements and best practices to keep the SBHC as safe as possible for all visits. This includes COVID-19 symptom and exposure screening for everyone who enters the SBHC, physical distancing, face coverings, hygiene practices, and cleaning and disinfecting. Students arriving at the SBHC will follow practices that will largely mirror those of the school. We will guide students through the SBHC's specific and youth-friendly practices when they arrive for a SBHC visit.

Is the SBHC able to provide services to school staff, students' family members, and/or others this year?

[Yes / No / who can be served / during what hours; note if by appointment only]

Is the SBHC doing COVID-19 screening and testing of students or others who become ill while at school?

[The SBHC is / is not screening / testing symptomatic students / others at school. Clarify school and SBHC roles in screening and testing of symptomatic persons on campus.]

How do I enroll?

To enroll in the SBHC or for more information, please contact:

[Name]

[SBHC Sponsoring Agency]

[Phone] / [Email]

For online enrollment, you can find our enrollment packet and consent forms here: [link]

Appendix B

HELPFUL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH RESOURCES

New Mexico Public Education Department Safe and Healthy Schools Bureau: <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/safe-healthy-schools/behavioral-health/> has a number of helpful tools created in collaboration with the New Mexico Department of Health, including:

- How to Take Care of Your Mental Health During Social Isolation
- Countering COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Stigma and Racism: Tips for Parents and Caregivers
- 5 Easy Ways to Reduce Coronavirus Anxiety.
- How to Talk to Children About Coronavirus
- Help Loved Ones with Anxiety
- Helping Youth Experiencing Homelessness

NMConnect – the state of New Mexico and NMCAL launched a new phone app that provides free 24-hour crisis and non-crisis support and access to behavioral health professionals who can text or talk via phone with individuals needing a listening ear or referrals to longer-term support. The app links users to the New Mexico Crisis Access Line (NMCAL), which provides safety net services statewide. NMCAL is still available via phone 24/7 toll-free by calling 1-855-NMCRISIS (1-855-662-7474). More about the app at:

<https://www.newmexico.gov/2020/04/14/new-mexico-unveils-app-for-behavioral-health-support/>

NM CYFD has a special COVID-19 Behavioral Health Supports page: <https://cyfd.org/news/covid-19#supports> which includes tools like:

- Helping Children Cope Poster
- Helping Prevent COVID-19 Poster
- Links to other state department resources

Boystown Your Life Your Voice – online and hotline tools for coping, www.yourlifeyourvoice.org including:

- Flyer, “99 Coping Tips”
- Hotline, 1-800-448-3000
- Downloadable mood-tracking app