



Issue Brief

Leveraging Ohio’s Student Wellness and Success Funds to Support School-Based Health Care

Ohio’s Student Wellness and Success Funds are an important vehicle for the provision of school-based health care services. However, school districts across Ohio may not be taking full advantage of these funds to advance school-based health care. Several factors may contribute to this, including competing school needs and priorities and challenges schools and community partners face in establishing sustainable school-based health care models.

Changes introduced in Ohio’s State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2024-2025 budget have elevated the importance of using Ohio’s Student Wellness and Success funding to support the delivery of school-based health care. This brief provides an overview of Ohio’s Student Wellness and Success Funds and identifies opportunities for school districts to leverage funding in support of sustainable, high quality, comprehensive, and integrated school-based health care services.

What are Student Wellness and Success Funds?

Student Wellness and Success Funds were first introduced by Governor Mike DeWine in the SFY 2020-2021 budget and have been allocated in succeeding budgets by the General Assembly as part of Ohio’s school funding formula. The funds are designed to remove barriers to learning and support a Whole Child approach to addressing student needs.² School districts, working with community partners (see page 2), can use the funds for various programming and initiatives, including physical and mental health care, social services, and wraparound supports.

What is school-based health care?

School-based health care is a broad term that refers to improving student access to healthcare services in school settings.

Why focus on school-based health care?

Health is an important factor that contributes to a child’s success both inside and outside of school. Students who are sick or who have unaddressed health conditions often cannot focus inside the classroom and are more likely to miss school altogether. School-based health care plays a critical role in improving children’s access to healthcare services to keep students healthy, in school, and ready to learn. The research is clear, healthy students learn better and are, in turn, better equipped and supported to reach their full potential.¹



What are the requirements for Student Wellness and Success Funds?

Under Ohio Revised Code §3317.26, school districts can use Student Wellness and Success Funds for any of the following initiatives:

- Mental health services
- Culturally appropriate, evidence-based or evidence-informed prevention services
- Services for homeless youth
- Services for child welfare involved youth
- Community liaisons or programs that connect students to community resources
- Physical healthcare services
- Family engagement and support services
- Student services provided prior to or after the regularly scheduled school day or any time school is not in session³



In SFY 2024-2025, there were notable changes made to the requirements school districts must adhere to when using Student Wellness and Success Funds:

- At least 50% of all funds received must be spent on physical health care⁴ and/or mental health services⁵
- A plan for the utilization of the funds must be developed in coordination with a (1) community mental health prevention or treatment provider or local board of alcohol, drug addiction, and mental health services (ADAMH) **and** (2) one of the community partners listed below.

In addition, to encourage school districts to utilize the funding provided, funds must be spent by the end of the fiscal year following the year in which funds were received.

Community partners for Student Wellness and Success Funds

Educational service center	County board of developmental disabilities	Board of health of a city or general health district (i.e., local health department)
County department of job and family services	Nonprofit organization with experience serving children	Public hospital agency

This category can include a wide array of entities, including healthcare providers that school districts can partner with to provide school-based health care services such as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), FQHC Look-Alikes, children's hospitals, other nonprofit hospitals and health systems, and local ADAMH boards.

How can Student Wellness and Success funds be used to support school-based health care?

Page 4 provides examples of how Student Wellness and Success Funds can be used to support the delivery of school-based health care services. Schools should rely on the findings of a needs assessment to inform their decisions on which school-based health care model(s) will best support the health and education needs of students in their building and/or district.



A **needs assessment** is a process that combines the evaluation of data (quantitative and qualitative) and engagement of interested parties/partners to inform decision making.

Supporting school-based health centers (SBHCs)

Student Wellness and Success Funds can be leveraged to support school-based health care through the implementation of SBHCs. SBHCs are a leading, evidence-driven model for advancing sustainable, high quality, comprehensive, and integrated school-based health care services. However, there are few examples statewide where school districts have leveraged Student Wellness and Success Funds to support SBHCs.

SBHCs are created through a partnership between a school/school district and a healthcare provider to increase access to, at minimum, primary healthcare services to students on a school campus. Through an established memorandum of understanding with the school, the healthcare provider (also referred to as the SBHC operator) runs the day-to-day operations of the SBHC, employing staff to provide healthcare services to students. Strong collaboration between the school and SBHC operator is needed to ensure that student healthcare needs are met.

In addition to providing primary care services, such as well child visits, immunizations, and acute care for students, SBHCs often provide students with:

- Behavioral health services and supports
- Oral health
- Vision services
- Chronic disease management
- Care coordination services
- Social services and supports

SBHCs are typically sponsored by a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) or FQHC Look-Alike, a hospital or health system (adult or pediatric), or a local health department. The **Ohio School-Based Health Alliance census** provides location and operational information on Ohio SBHCs. Many of the school-based health fund uses outlined on page 4 can also support or strengthen the SBHC model to ensure it maximizes its efficacy, reach, and sustainability.

Student Wellness and Success Fund use examples

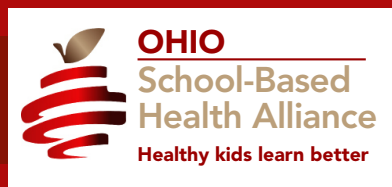
School-based health care models and services	Potential allowable costs to support school-based health care
<p>School-based health center (SBHC) has a designated, dedicated space on a school campus that a healthcare provider operates from to ensure students have access to, at minimum, primary care services. The Ohio Alliance SBHC 101 Toolkit provides guidance, resources, and tools to support efforts to learn about, plan for, and set up an SBHC.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility planning and construction costs, including adapting existing school building space • SBHC technology costs, including data sharing infrastructure and language translation services • SBHC equipment, including vision and dental • SBHC medical supply costs • Subsidizing healthcare provider operator startup and continued operations • Underwrite school and healthcare operator time spent on coordination activities
<p>School nurses are the first line of triage in schools for children with health needs. School nurses often manage health screenings and referrals, provide health education, and support emergency planning services for students. School nurses also work hand-in-hand with SBHCs to provide student-centered services and care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School nurse salary • Underwrite time spent on care coordination with an SBHC
<p>Telehealth can connect students with needed healthcare services located off-site, such as urgent, acute specialty, and behavioral health care. Telehealth is particularly useful for schools that are unable to build a brick and mortar SBHC or to supplement existing SBHC services. For example, telehealth can provide students with access to an SBHC that is located in another school building within their district.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telehealth equipment and infrastructure technology • Adaptation of existing space within school building to use for telehealth service delivery • Adult telepresenter salary (professional staff who accompany student during telehealth visit) • Telehealth provider salary
<p>Embedded mental health and substance use disorder professionals in the school or within an SBHC can provide on-site, real-time behavioral health services and recovery supports.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed psychologist, social worker, or counselor salaries • Underwrite clinician time not covered by billing, such as time spent on care coordination • Contracting with community behavioral health providers • Subsidizing behavioral health SBHC staff
<p>Community health workers (also referred to as CHWs) connect families with resources to address social driver of health needs, such as food insecurity, housing, and transportation. CHWs can also be included as part of a multi-disciplinary team within an SBHC.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System and infrastructure costs associated with identifying and tracking students and connecting families to community resources • CHW salary for the school and/or SBHC
<p>School-based health care transportation often consists of a van or small bus and a driver trained in accompanying school-aged patients to an SBHC in the district or an offsite healthcare provider.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School district vehicle • Driver salary

Note: This figure provides examples of the ways Student Wellness and Success Funds may be used to support school-based health care and is not an exhaustive list. All requirements regarding Student Wellness and Success Fund use must be met as outlined on page 2.

Healthy, well-educated children are the foundation for thriving Ohio communities and an economically vibrant state. Ohio’s Student Wellness and Success Funds provide a unique opportunity for school districts to address student needs by implementing a collaborative approach to learning and wellness. By strategically leveraging funds toward school-based health care, schools can close gaps in outcomes and provide students with the services and supports they need to be healthy and ready to learn.

Notes

1. Michael, Shannon L., Caitlin L. Merlo, Charles E. Basch, Kathryn R. Wentzel, and Howell Wechsler. “Critical Connections: Health and Academics.” *Journal of School Health* 85, no. 11 (2015): 740–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.12309>. See also Basch, Charles E. “Healthier Students Are Better Learners: High-Quality, Strategically Planned, and Effectively Coordinated School Health Programs Must Be a Fundamental Mission of Schools to Help Close the Achievement Gap.” *Journal of School Health* 81, no. 10 (2011): 650–62. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2011.00640.x>.
2. The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce prioritizes a collaborative approach to learning and wellness. <https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Student-Supports>.
3. This list is a summary of the categories as outlined in Ohio law. For more detail and specific language, see Ohio Revised Code § 3317.25 (B)(1)(j) to (q). Requirements apply to a city, local, or exempted village school district, joint vocational school district, community school or STEM school.
4. Includes telehealth services and community-based health services. See ORC § 3317.25 (B)(1)(o).
5. Includes telehealth services, community-based behavioral health services, and recovery supports. See ORC § 3317.25 (B)(1)(j).



Ohio School-Based Health Alliance

The Ohio School-Based Health Alliance (“Ohio Alliance”) is the only statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan organization created to improve access to comprehensive, integrated health services by advancing and supporting the sustainability and expansion of school-based health care.



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