

School-Based Health Care

The establishment of school-based health centers provides an effective way to advocate for children. The National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP), as a professional organization that advocates for children and provides leadership for Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (PNPs), supports the use of pediatric nurse practitioners in school-based health centers to eliminate *access to care* barriers for children by providing comprehensive primary care and linking these services with other community resources (Jones & Clark, 1997). PNPs, collaborating with school personnel, improve health care delivery and promote effective, timely, and accessible services for children (Gaffrey & Bergen, 1998). Although school-based health centers are located on the grounds of the target school, they serve a broader population and geographic area.

There are major gaps in today's health care system for children; inaccessibility to health care, lack of preventive services for youth (Nader, 1998), and lack of a stable funding stream that affects sustainability (Brindis, 2003). School-based health centers fill these gaps by providing comprehensive physical and mental health services to children in need of care at locations accessible to children. School-based health centers are not designed to replace an ongoing relationship a child may have with a primary provider. Rather, the centers are designed to overcome social and economic barriers to accessing health care (Levy &

Shepardson, 1992).

NAPNAP supports the following:

- The availability of school-based health centers for all school aged children, from infancy through high school.
- A multidisciplinary team, consisting of nurse practitioners, educators, school nurses, physicians, social service, and other professionals, should collaborate to best meet the needs of children and adolescents.
- With parental involvement, children and adolescents should receive comprehensive primary care, including social services and mental health and health education with a focus on wellness.
- School-based health care should be delivered in the context of family and community.
- All students should receive the health-related programs and services necessary for them to derive maximum benefit from their education (Allenworth et al., 1997).
- School-based health centers should meet standards of care similar to those of community health centers, including certification, credentialing of providers, and a systematic evaluation of the outcomes of services (Gance-Cleveland et al., 2003).
- Legislative support for school-based health centers.
- Health carriers to provide coverage for services provided in school-based health centers if

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the services would be covered under the policy in another setting.

- Managed care plans to provide coverage for services provided in school-based health centers without requiring prior approval from a primary care provider.

In summary, school-based health centers and services are an important and necessary component to health care for children that provide a comprehensive range of services that specifically meet the needs of children. They are located where the children are, thus increasing access to health care. School-based health services provide a means to deliver health care to all children, including the many children who have inadequate or no health insurance (Edmunds & Coye, 1998). The school-based health care setting provides a unique opportunity to implement a multidisciplinary team

approach, utilizing integrated services to effectively treat problems affecting a child's health, school performance, and school attendance.

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