

Public Health Partnerships with Education and Medicaid: Improving School Health

According to CDC's Division of Adolescent Health and School Health, as of 2017 the United States has [made progress](#) in improving adolescent sexual health but is losing ground on mental health and suicide prevention. Continuing to improve adolescents' sexual, physical, and mental health requires improving [protective factors](#) like parent engagement in schools and school connectedness. State health agencies have a role in improving the health of youth and can partner with existing efforts like the [Healthy Students, Promising Futures Learning Collaborative](#) to address physical and mental health in school settings.

Healthy Students, Promising Futures Learning Collaborative Background

The learning collaborative was established in July 2016 with support from HHS and the U.S. Department of Education out of the growing recognition that delivering health services in schools and promoting safe and supportive school environments are key strategies for improving youth physical and mental health. Healthy Schools Campaign and Trust for America's Health co-convene the learning collaborative, which comprises 15 states. ASTHO

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provides funding and technical assistance to the learning collaborative by stressing the importance of prevention and public health agencies in delivering school health programs. The collaborative's key focus areas include establishing cross-sector partnerships, expanding Medicaid services in schools, sharing data across state agencies, and implementing school health policies and programs that promote students' physical and behavioral health.

Learning Collaborative Successes

District of Columbia: Data-Sharing Agreement

The District of Columbia improved coordination and service delivery by implementing a [data sharing agreement](#) between the District of Columbia State Board of Education, District of Columbia Department of Health, and the D.C. Department of Health Care Finance (the District of Columbia's Medicaid agency). The agencies collaborated to ensure compliance with the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) and used the data to target outreach and resources to schools and students with the greatest unmet needs.

Ohio: Integrated Physical and Mental Health Services

The state is increasing access to school-based [health services](#) through a collaboration between the Governor's Office of Health Transformation, the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio Department of Medicaid, the Ohio Department of Health, and the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Ohio developed a comprehensive [School-Based Health Care Support Toolkit](#) that includes resources to help schools and communities deliver physical and mental health services in schools.

South Carolina: Telehealth

In 2016, South Carolina's governor signed [S.B. 1035](#) into law to increase access to telehealth, including in schools. As of 2019, the state's [telehealth program](#) has expanded to over 80 schools, focusing on schools with students who experience the greatest health disparities. The SC Department of Education and SC

Medicaid were key in expanding telehealth services. Through the telehealth program, school nurses are linked with community providers to coordinate acute and chronic disease management services as well as mental health services. South Carolina protects the safety and privacy of children by requiring [parental consent](#) for telehealth services.

Strategies for State Public Health Agencies to Address School Health

ASTHO, Trust for America’s Health and Healthy Schools Campaign have developed the following list of strategies for state health agencies to consider when engaging other state agencies to address school health.

Strategies for Engaging Education Agencies	Strategies for Engaging Medicaid Agencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize the critical connection between learning and health and the impact negative health conditions have on learning. • Highlight the role public health can play in supporting needs assessments and leveraging data to understand the leading health issues impacting children. The national Every Student Succeeds Act requires all school districts to conduct needs assessments for underperforming schools. • Understand the education accountability metrics in your state (e.g., chronic absence, academic achievement, and high school graduation rates) and consider how to frame your work in terms of its impact on those measures. • Support education agencies in identifying evidence-based interventions that can be implemented in schools using tools like CDC’s Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool, School Health Index Self-Assessment and Planning Guide and Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate the Medicaid agency about the role and capabilities of public health, such as the ten essential public health services, upstream primary prevention, and population health management. • Understand the coverage and utilization landscape in your state and elevate the role public health can play in increasing the use of benefits. • Understand Medicaid prevention benefits including EPSDT (Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment) benefits and how your state has implemented the reversal of the Free Care Rule to allow for Medicaid reimbursement in schools for general education students. • Leverage public health data linking the top 2-3 health conditions from your state’s State Health Improvement Plan to delivery of Medicaid services in school settings. • Understand Medicaid’s accountability metrics (e.g. Child Core Set) and consider how to frame your work in terms of its impact on these measures.

Conclusion

To learn more about the role of health in education and how your state can improve health through the education system visit CDC’s [Adolescent and School Health program](#) web page. A goal of the learning collaborative is to increase cross-sector collaborations, including engagement with public health agencies. Public health agencies can play a key role as conveners and subject matter experts in prevention and behavioral health programs. If you work at a state health agency and would like to learn more about the [Healthy Students Promising Futures Learning Collaborative](#), please email Ioana Ungureanu, ASTHO’s senior analyst, public and behavioral health integration, at iungureanu@astho.org.

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