

DC HEALTH SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES TELEHEALTH PROGRAM

The District of Columbia Department of Health (DC Health) has recently launched an expansion of the School Health Services Program (SHSP). In alignment with DC Health's mission to promote health, wellness, and equity across the District of Columbia, the School Health Services Telehealth Program (SHSTP) will provide telehealth services to students enrolled in schools participating in the SHSP across the District. The health suite staff may decide to utilize telehealth for a visit based on their assessment of the student. In addition, telehealth consultations with Children's National and other providers will be available for school nursing staff as needed for guidance and treatment of medical concerns.

Frequently Asked Questions about the School Health Services Telehealth Program:

What is the School Health Services Telehealth Program?

The program brings additional health services and increases access for students by using technology to connect students to medical providers. Computers, tablets, webcams and in some cases, phones will be used so that your child and the SHSTP provider can communicate. In addition, special tools may be used, such as an electronic stethoscope for listening to a heartbeat and an electronic otoscope with a camera to look inside your child's ear.

What are some of the benefits of this program?

Through the SHSTP, students may receive quicker access to care they need and rapid diagnoses of medical conditions. The program also:

- May decrease time away from school for students and time off work for parents/guardians
- Increases access to pediatric primary care providers
- Helps students manage complex or chronic health conditions
- Provides early recognition of sports injury
- Reduces transportation time and costs

Who will be conducting or participating in the telehealth visit?

School health suite staff will operate the telehealth equipment. A pediatric SHSTP provider will conduct the appointment via videoconference. In addition, some parts of the visit may be conducted by health suite staff under the guidance of the telehealth provider. A provider may participate in care coordination by engaging other healthcare providers to support your child's visit. Both the health suite staff and the healthcare providers will maintain the confidentiality of all information obtained. Parents and guardians will be invited to visits for your child, however, if we are unable to reach them, the visit will continue as planned.

What if I do not want my student to participate in the telehealth program?

No student may participate in the telehealth program without the explicit written consent of their parent/guardian where applicable. For students who experience a need to participate, but

do not have written parental consent on file, verbal parental consent to services may be obtained. The utilization of verbal consent is a one-time courtesy provided to parents for non-emergent medical situations. Post the initial SHSTP visit, parents will be required to provide written consent for future visits.

What type of providers are available?

Pediatric healthcare providers are staffed through Children’s National Hospital and will be available when a telehealth health visit is needed. In the future, the program will expand to include pediatric healthcare providers from other health care organizations as well. When a telehealth visit is initiated, students will be assigned to the next available pediatric healthcare provider to facilitate immediate service. Currently, students/guardians do not have the ability to choose a preferred provider and one will be assigned to facilitate the visit based on availability.

How will information collected from the telehealth visit be used?

Providers may release specific medical information to school officials and DC Health, either because it is required by law or regulation or because it is necessary to protect your child’s health and safety. The video session is not recorded, but some elements, such as photos, may be taken, if necessary, for medical review. These records will be kept confidential.

The health suite staff will keep records of the visit in the student’s health record at the school, the same way they do for all visits to the school health suite. These files are password protected and not accessible to anyone except Children’s School Services and DC Health staff assigned to the program. DC Health and CSS are required to protect the privacy of students’ protected health information in accordance with the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The telehealth provider will also keep a medical record of the student visit. These are also kept confidential as required by Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Will access to the telehealth program be provided year-round including holidays/breaks?

Access to the School Health Services Telehealth Program will only be provided during normal school hours when school is in session and health suite staff is available. Telehealth services will not be provided on weekends, after-hours, or during holidays/scheduled breaks.

Is there any other information I should know?

You and your child have the right to ask the school health suite staff or health care provider to stop the telehealth visit at any time.

Will health suite staff still be available in the school health suite?

Yes, school health suite staff will continue to deliver in-person services, including but not limited to physical and behavioral health referrals, implementation of healthcare plans for students with special health care needs, mandated screenings and enforcement of public health precautions. Additionally, health suite staff will continue to address short-term medical management of illness and injuries, medication management, and first aid within the scope of practice. If your child needs a primary care physician or another healthcare professional, the health suite staff can make a list of providers available.

Will I be billed for services delivered via telehealth?

Initially, patients will not be billed for these SHSTP acute care visits, however, a billing process may be implemented in the future. Prior to initiation of a billing process, there will be a communication sent to parents, guardians, and schools except for services that fall within DC minor consent laws. Details on the potential billing process will be provided when they are finalized.

Contact Information

If you would like more information or have additional questions about the program, please email:

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shs.program@dc.gov

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Alternatively, you may submit a program inquiry through the DC Health School Health Services Program Portal at dchealth.force.com/studenthealthservices.