

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES PROGRAM
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
PARENTS

What is the School Health Services Program (SHSP)? The District of Columbia Department of Health (DC Health) provides approved health suites through the SHSP for public schools and some public charter schools in the DC. The program includes primary care services, care coordination and quality improvement. It is designed to enable District students to reach their optimal health so they can learn in a safe and supportive environment. Children's School Services (CSS), a DC Health grantee, provides nursing and allied health staff and is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the SHSP.

What services does the health suite provide? Health suite staff assess sick and injured students, and provide acute care to students referred to the health suite. For students with special health care needs, health suite staff provide additional services as prescribed by a student's physician that are required to take place during the school day. This may include medication administration, treatment administration, monitoring of chronic health conditions, coordination of care, development of an Individualized Health Plan (IHP), and participation in interdisciplinary school teams that provide individualized education planning for students.

What does health suite staffing at my child's school look like? The goal of the program is to provide schools that have a DC Health approved health suite with 40 hours of staffing per week. This coverage may be provided by a nurse all days of the week or an allied health professional may provide coverage 1-2 days per week. The makeup of each school's health suite coverage is determined by the level of student health needs at each school.

What hours are health suite staff available at my child's school? Health suite working hours are from 8:00am-4:30pm daily. (Please note: health suite staff take lunch breaks in the early afternoon.) For the exact

availability of the health suite staff in your child's school please check with the school principal.

What happens when a health suite staff member is not on site? School staff are equipped to address emergency health planning in the school building. School staff are trained to administer basic first aid and to activate emergency medical services when needed. Health suite staff and school staff are in daily communication and work together to ensure students' health needs are met during the school day. Schools have designated staff members who have completed the Administration of Medication (AOM) training, permitting them to administer medication to students during the school day.

Can health suite staff act as my child's primary healthcare provider? The health suite staff members at your child's school should not replace their primary healthcare provider. Health suite staff can provide information on where to obtain primary healthcare services for your child.

Can the SHSP refer my child to healthcare providers? Health suite staff may refer students to seek consultation or care from a medical specialist or their primary care provider. Common referrals include hearing screening follow-up, vision screening follow-up, incomplete or expired school health forms, missing or expired immunizations, and referrals to a school-based health center. They can also provide information on how to find a primary healthcare provider for your child if he or she does not have one.

How do I know if my child is due for health services required for school enrollment? Health suite staff complete reviews of your child's school health documents and records. In the event your child is due for their annual well-child exam, annual dental exam, or missing needed immunizations, health suite staff provide a reminder to parents and guardians.

Does the health suite provide behavioral health services such as counseling? The health suite does not provide direct behavioral health services to students. However, the District of Columbia Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) operates a school-based program in DC public and public charter schools. To get more information on this program and its availability in your child's school, please visit their website at <https://dbh.dc.gov/service/school-behavioral-health-program>. You may also contact the 24/7 Access Helpline at 1-888-793-4357 for information about behavioral health services.

Can health suite staff accompany my child on a field trip? In an effort to maintain the health and safety of students during the school day, it is imperative that health suite staff remain in the school building. As such, health suite staff do not accompany class field trips. Instead, a school staff member who is trained to administer medication attends field trips and other offsite events. You may refer to your child's school field trip policy for more information.

What is the best way for me to contact the health suite staff at my child's school? Contact the front office at your child's school to receive the contact information for the school health suite. Can health suite staff administer my child's immunizations? No. Immunizations may be obtained by a child's primary care provider or a school-based health center if applicable.

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Where can I go to get my child's immunizations? Immunizations can be provided by a school-based health center, if your child's school has one, or by your child's primary care provider. If you do not have health insurance, your insurance does not cover immunizations, or you are covered by Medicaid, these providers offer free immunizations: <https://dchealth.dc.gov/service/medicare-uninsured-underinsured-vaccine-providers>.

How do I know if my child needs an Individualized Health Plan (IHP)? An IHP is a documented plan of care for students who require ongoing healthcare management. If your child's health condition requires periodic intervention such as medication administration or glucose monitoring, your child needs an IHP. Parents should consult with their child's primary care physician to determine the child's health needs during the school day and collaborate with the school

nurse to develop the IHP. The development an IHP is a collaborative process including the school nurse, parents/guardians, your child's primary care provider, and school staff. For more information, visit <https://dchealth.dc.gov/service/children-and-youth-special-health-care-needs> or contact your child's school.

What is the difference between SHSP and a school-based health center (SBHC)? School-based health centers provide comprehensive primary care, including oral and behavioral health services, and may act as a student's primary care provider. DC Health school-based health centers are in select school operated by District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). The SHSP provides nursing and allied health services to all DCPS schools and some public charter schools, but these services do not replace those of a primary care provider.

Can my child receive health care at a school-based health center (SBHC)? Students enrolled at a school that has an SBHC may receive care. Parents must enroll students in the SBHC in order to access SBHC services. Students at schools that do not have an SBHC cannot receive care at one of these facilities. For more information on SBHCs and to access SBHC enrollment forms, visit <https://dchealth.dc.gov/service/school-based-health-centers>.

How often do I need to submit a Universal Health Certificate (UHC) for my child? The UHC must be completed by your child's physician or nurse practitioner each year. It is submitted to the school's Registrar prior to the first day of school. The UHC must have been completed within the past 365 days when you submit it to the school. After 365 days, the form is considered out of date and a provider must complete a new UHC for your child.

How often do I need to submit an Oral Health Assessment (OHA)? The same requirements listed above for submitting the UHC also apply to the OHA.

Where can I get the required school health forms? School health forms including the UHC and OHA may be accessed at <https://dchealth.dc.gov/node/113622>.

Who can I contact with questions about SHSP? You may contact DC Health via email at shs.program@dc.gov.

How can I give feedback on the SHSP? Parents and guardians can provide feedback on the SHSP by completing the online parent feedback survey found here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SHSPParentFeedback>.