

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
**SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES PROGRAM**  
**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**  
**SCHOOL STAFF**

**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 hours are health suite staff available at my 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 school, please check with your school's administration or the health suite staff member.

**Can health suite staff accompany class field trips?** 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 school's field trip policy for a specific protocol.

**Can health suite staff fill in for a health teacher?** Health suite staff are not a substitute for school staff or vice versa. Each school is responsible for ensuring appropriate staff meet applicable health and physical education standards. For more information on health education resources, please visit the Office of the State Superintendent of Education's website at <https://osse.dc.gov/service/health-education-resources>.

**Can the health suite provide behavioral health services?** 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. For more information on the program, visit <https://dbh.dc.gov/node/121802> or call the 24/7 Access Helpline at 1-888-793-4357.

**Can I refer a student to the health suite if they have health-related questions?** Yes. Health suite staff can answer questions and provide counseling on some health topics. Students still need the appropriate pass if referred to the health suite.

**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.

**What should I do if medication administration is needed and a certified staff member is not available?** Schools are responsible for ensuring that an Administration of Medication (AOM) trained staff member is available when needed to administer medication to students. There should be a sufficient number of staff members trained to account for student medication needs on field trips, in the absence of health suite staff members, or other instances that require availability of an AOM-trained school staff member.

**How can I help ensure the health and safety of my students during the school day?** School staff can help ensure student health and safety by knowing your school's emergency response protocols, becoming trained in administration of medication, and coordinating with your school health suite staff to address students' health needs.

**What is the difference between the 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 schools 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 SHSP staff refer a student to external resources or 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 followup, incomplete or expired school health forms, missing or expired immunizations, and referrals to a schoolbased health center.

**How can I participate in the Administration of Medication Training?** If you are interested in becoming certified to administer medication, please reach out to your school principal. The principal will submit your name to either DCPS Health and Wellness staff or the DC Public Charter School Board.

**How is information on the SHSP shared with school staff?** The SHSP provides information and needed biweekly updates to DCPS and the DC Public Charter School Board, this information is then disseminated to school administration. Additionally, school administration is contacted by SHSP staff at the beginning of each school year to schedule the Principal:Nurse meeting. During this meeting, SHSP staff discuss details for managing student health needs specific to each school and provide school administration with an overview of the SHSP.

**Where can I refer parents who have questions about SHSP?** Parents may contact DC Health by emailing [shs.program@dc.gov](mailto:shs.program@dc.gov). Parents can also provide feedback on the SHSP by completing the online parent feedback survey found here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SHSPParentFeedback>.

**How can school staff give feedback on the SHSP?** School staff can provide feedback on the SHSP by completing the online school staff feedback survey found here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SHSPStaffFeedback>.

