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School-Based Health Centers Tour

Access to healthcare in public schools is a critical issue for the overall well-being and academic success of students. [National health research](#) highlights the importance of having healthcare centers in schools, noting these centers provide timely and convenient medical care, leading to improved attendance rates and reduced health-related barriers to learning. School-based health centers (SBHCs) have been shown to enhance access to primary care, effectively manage chronic conditions, and provide vital mental health support to students. Furthermore, education research indicates that SBHCs contribute to better health outcomes by reducing hospitalizations and emergency department visits. For example, analysis generated by [Harvard University's Graduate School of Education](#) notes the establishment and expansion of healthcare centers in our public schools is crucial for promoting the holistic well-being of our students and their academic achievements.

Analysis from the [National Association of School Nurses](#) found access to school-based nursing care improved student and school district outcomes, including the general health of students and school staff, increased attendance and productivity, and reduced rates of chronic absenteeism and school drop-outs. Additionally, research from the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) has shown that school-based nursing reduces chronic absenteeism by providing outreach to students and families to meet their individual needs, helping students and families access needed physical or mental healthcare providers, ensuring students feel safe at school, and providing student and family support during the school day.

School-Based Health Centers in New Mexico

A SBHC is an independent health clinic located on or near school grounds that collaborates with the school nurse's office to support students' health, well-being, and academic success. These centers consist of a team of qualified professionals from community-based health organizations, tailored to meet the specific needs of students and available facility resources. The [NM Alliance for School-Based Health Care](#), an agency representing school-based health centers in New Mexico, notes the ideal SBHC model integrates both physical and behavioral health care services, offering primary care as the foundation and extending to additional services. SBHCs operate during school hours or as needed to serve the needs of the student population. SBHCs are operated by a sponsoring agency, typically a community health organization, responsible for

Key Takeaways

School-based nursing reduces chronic absenteeism by providing outreach to students and families.

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In New Mexico, 80 SBHCs at 50 high schools, 11 middle schools, four elementary schools, and 15 multi-grade schools

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The 2023 GAA includes a total of \$4.5 million for SBHCs

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During the 2023 session, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 397, codifying school-based health centers in state law.

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managing the clinical and operational aspects of the center. Although SBHCs are operated by sponsoring agencies, New Mexico Alliance for School-Based Health Care staff note SBHCs are typically initiated by school staff and potential sponsoring medical entities typically have more requests than they can manage.

In New Mexico, there are approximately 80 SBHCs at 50 high schools, 11 middle schools, four elementary schools, and 15 multi-grade schools. These centers operate throughout every region of the state, providing health services to students at those schools. Many of the SBHCs also serve students from other schools in the district, as well as staff and community members. The Alliance for School-Based Health Care reports [fifty-six](#) of the state's SBHCs contract with the Department of Health's Office of School Adolescence Health to provide services. See **Attachment 1** for a map of SBHC based on the total student population and **Attachment 2** for a map of SBHC by county.

The New Mexico Alliance for School-Based Health Care 2021-2022 annual report notes over 55 percent of visits to SBHCs are for primary care.

Student Health and Student Outcomes. A [2016 analysis](#) from the National Association of School Nurses

found access to school-based nursing care improved student and school district outcomes, including general health of students and school staff, increased attendance and productivity, and reduced rates of chronic absenteeism and school drop-outs. Research has shown school-based nursing reduces chronic absenteeism by providing outreach to students and families to meet their individual needs, helping students and families access needed physical or mental healthcare providers, ensuring students feel safe at school, and providing student and family support during the school day.

Services Provided by New Mexico SBHCs

SBHCs play a critical role in improving student and family access to healthcare. SBHCs are located on school campuses, they provide students with better access to healthcare, better health care outcomes, and fewer illness-related absences. SBHCs can also provide on-campus support for student mental health, including counseling and medication management.

Services offered at SBHCs vary according to school, community, and health center operator. Typically, services focus on primary physical care, especially acute care, and primary behavioral care.

- Acute care, including addressing illness, injury, preventive services, and chronic disease management;
- Reproductive health care, including providing health education, contraception, and prenatal services;
- Well child checks, including providing age-appropriate health education and immunizations
- Sports physicals, including assessing problems that may interfere with athletic performance and providing guidance for avoiding injury.
- Behavioral Health for adjustment disorders, defined as an emotional or behavioral reaction to a stressful event or change in a person's life, depression, and anxiety.

Department of Health Benchmark Standards. The New Mexico Department of Health currently provides supplemental operational funding and technical assistance to 16 sponsoring provider organizations to deliver the school-based health model of care in 54 schools. The Department of Health's Office of School and Adolescent Health has developed a [set of standards and benchmarks](#) for SBHCs to assure the quality of services, reduce variability, and increase sustainability. Each SBHC must have a

written policy and procedure manual outlining its processes for compliance with the New Mexico standards and benchmarks for SBHCs and must provide evidence of adherence to the standards and benchmarks in order to receive funding from the Office



of School and Adolescent Health. SBHCs must operate within an appropriate facility in compliance with all laws and regulations governing health facilities, including NMAC 7.11.2, Requirements for Facilities Providing Outpatient Medical Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and federal, state and local building codes.

School-Based Health Center Statutory Language and Funding

During the 2023 session, the Legislature passed and the governor signed into law [Senate Bill 397](#), codifying school-based health centers in state law. SBHCs are clinics on, or near, school grounds that provide health services to students, and sometimes staff or community members. With this statutory change, the Legislature amended the Public Health Act to allow for the creation of school-based health centers. The New Mexico Department of Health will be required to certify that SBHCs meet the requirements outlined in the definition. The legislation also directs the New Mexico Department of Health to provide funding, technical assistance, and other necessary support for the creation and operation of school-based health centers.

State Funding: SBHCs are typically funded through the General Appropriations Act (GAA) within the Department of Health (DOH) budget. The 2023 GAA includes \$3 million from the early childhood care and education fund to the Department of Health to support existing SBHCs, and a nonrecurring \$1.5 million appropriation from the general fund for start-up costs related to SBHCs.

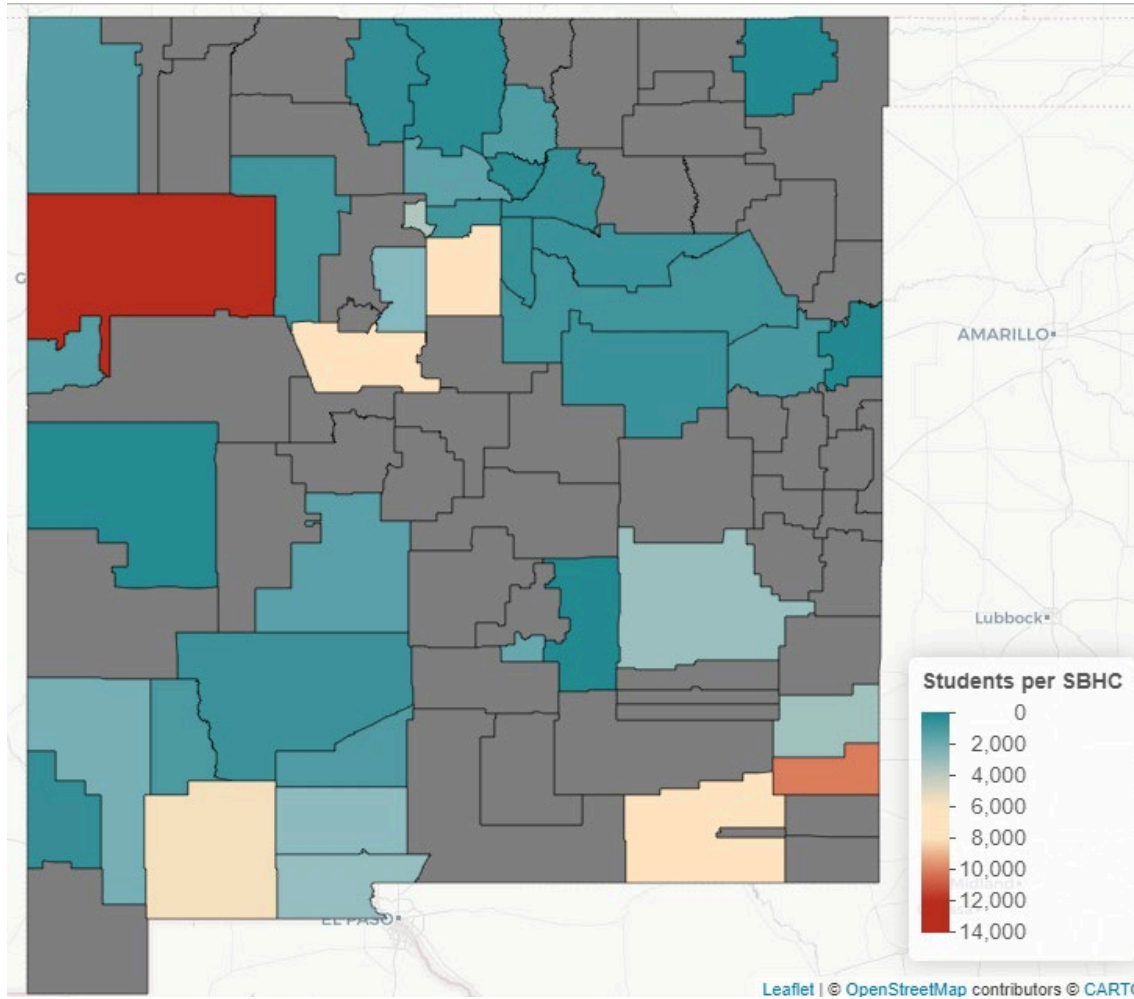
Federal Funding: SBHCs are also eligible for Medicaid reimbursement. In May 2023, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services approved New Mexico's state Medicaid plan amendments that will allow Medicaid to pay for healthcare services schools delivered to more of their Medicaid-enrolled students. Specifically, the amendments will allow New Mexico to receive Medicaid funding for services provided to all children covered by Medicaid, rather than only those children with an individual education plan. According to federally reported [Medicaid enrollment](#) and U.S. [Census data](#), approximately 70 percent of children under the age of 18 receive Medicaid benefits.

U.S. Department of Education Federal Relief Funding: In fall of 2022, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham allocated \$5.4 million in federal relief funding from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief fund and the Emergency Assistance of Non-Public Schools fund to initiate a pilot project to develop the capacity and expand SBHC access via telehealth or mobile clinics. The telehealth expansion project seeks to create telehealth hubs at existing SBHCs to provide services to nearby schools without a SBHC on campus. Department of Health staff this initial expansion will give access to services to an additional 20-30 schools.

The New Mexico Alliance for School-Based Health Care Annual Report notes SBHCs served more than 16 thousand patients during the 2021-2022 school year.

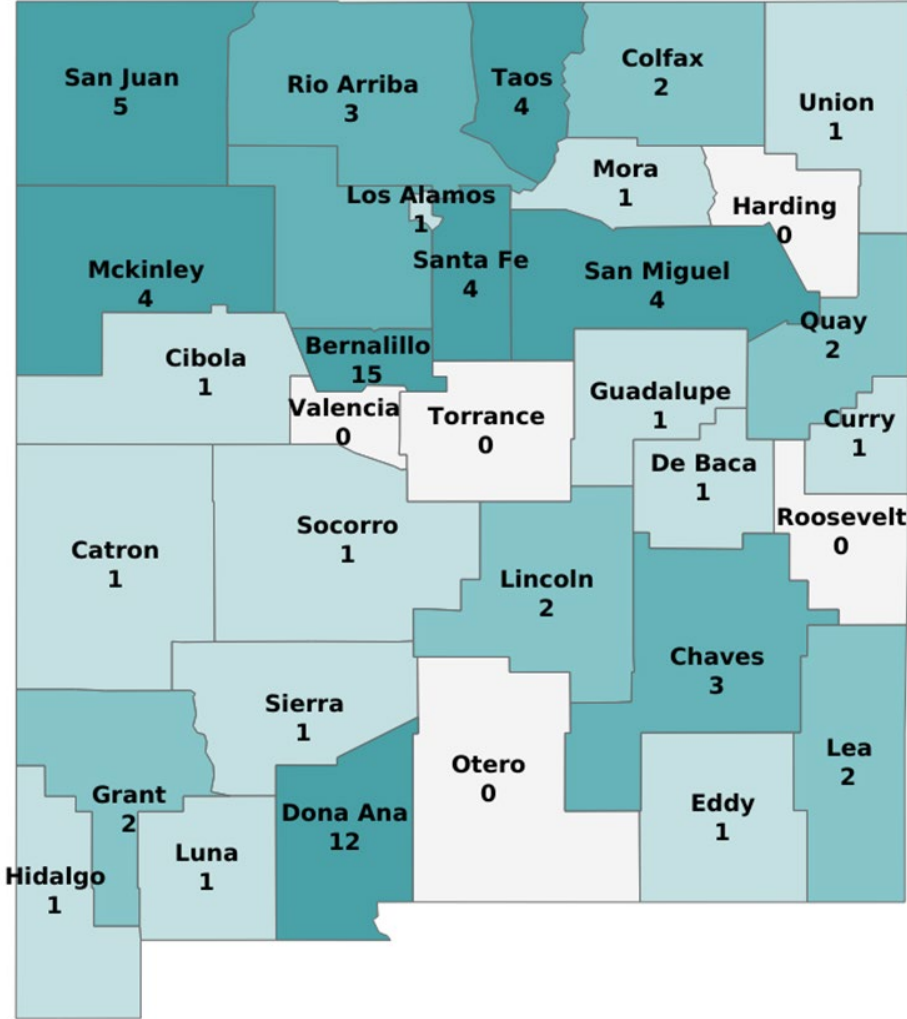
A 2013 [independent analysis](#) of New Mexico SBHCs determined they yielded a return on investment of \$6.07 for every dollar spent. SBHCs financially benefit the healthcare and education systems by reducing productivity costs related to missed school time, travel, and lost parental wages.

Number of Students per School-Based Health Center
(by New Mexico school district)



Source: New Mexico Alliance for School-Based Health Care and PED

New Mexico School-Based Health Centers
(by County)



Source: New Mexico Alliance for School-Based Health Care