



BLUEPRINT *for*
KENTUCKY'S
CHILDREN

Expand Behavioral Health and Other Health Services in Schools

By Allowing Schools to Tap into Federal Funding

Schools are safest, and children are most ready to learn, when students have access to quality, effective behavioral health care that can address issues such as depression, anxiety, and trauma. When schools offer these health services, students can quickly receive preventative treatment before these challenges get more serious and require more costly interventions. Many states are beginning to leverage a federal funding stream to expand school-based health services, such as comprehensive health screenings, therapeutic counseling for students who have experienced trauma, and more.

Schools can create safer and healthier learning environments by utilizing federal Medicaid dollars to:

Fund health professionals in schools

Though education leaders recognize the importance of having behavioral health providers on school campuses, many schools have struggled to find funding for health providers, such as counselors, nurses, and behavioral health specialists. For example, Kentucky has 1,688 students per school psychologist, when the national standard recommends 500 to 700. This opportunity would allow schools to place qualified health providers in schools and provide services covered under Medicaid. School districts' existing expenditures for health services could be used to meet the match required to draw down federal funds.

Eliminate barriers for families so children can be connected to critical health services

Children with Medicaid coverage often face barriers to receiving needed health services, such as long drives for parents, parents trying to balance work schedules, and finding a local provider who accepts Medicaid. Allowing schools to bill for health services provided to Medicaid-eligible children will help ensure children receive care. This opportunity can also help school-based providers connect the family to health professionals in the community so that children receive ongoing care.

Meet children's health needs so they can stay in the classroom and focus on learning

Research shows that when children experience health problems in the classroom, such as asthma, a tooth ache, or depression, it is difficult for them to concentrate and do well in school. According to National KIDS COUNT data, 25 percent of Kentucky children in 2015-16 have one or more emotional, behavioral, or developmental conditions. Providing health services in the school setting can help address immediate health care needs, connect students to behavioral health services, and keep students learning.

Blueprint for Kentucky's Children Solution:

Allow schools to tap into a federal funding stream to provide behavioral and other health services to more students.

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