



Office of Deputy Mayor Jennifer C. Niles

John A. Wilson Building | 1350 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Suite 307 | Washington, DC 20004

MEMORANDUM

TO: LEA Leaders

FROM: Jennifer Niles, Deputy Mayor for Education

DATE: May 9, 2017

SUBJECT: School Health Programs in School Year 2017-18

I want to share an important update with you concerning the health services our students will have access to next school year. Today, the Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) released new plans to expand school health and behavioral health services to improve student academic and health outcomes. DOH's School Health Program and DBH's School Mental Health Program both emphasize the importance of integration, alignment, and collaboration among the school, clinicians, and the community. Each plan reflects input and feedback from key stakeholders that strengthen the new health frameworks and support a successful transition. We request your help in carefully reviewing the final plans so that we can communicate them accurately to families prior to their implementation in school year 2017-18.

DBH's **School Mental Health Program** expands school-based behavioral health services to every DC Public School and Public Charter School. Once a school starts their transition to the new program, a DBH clinician will work with school leaders and staff to plan and implement prevention, universal screening, and technical assistance. Students needing early intervention or intensive services will be linked to a community-based organization (CBO), such as a Core Services Agency, who will provide those services to students either in the school, home, or community, depending on the terms of the agreement between the CBO and Local Education Agency, and as decided by the family. By using all behavioral health resources available in the District in a coordinated and integrated way, we can support the emotional well-being of all students in all schools.

To support a successful transition, the new program will be implemented in phases. Schools participating in the current School Mental Health Program will have through December 2017 to continue with their DBH clinician to ensure all students are properly transitioned to a new provider. Schools that are new to the School Mental Health Program can choose the timing for their transition that best meets their school's needs: (1) start of school, (2) fall semester, or (3) spring semester. This phased approach provides flexibility for the schools and will help to ensure a smooth changeover to the new behavioral health framework.

DOH's **School Health Services Program** is based on the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) Model. The model is child-centered and includes a variety of different





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services with the goal of connecting students and their families to services in the community for ongoing care. In practice, this means that schools will support students' health while in the school building and will also serve as hubs for connecting children with the primary care, prevention, and clinical resources they need in the community.

The new program allocates school nurses among schools based on student need, and adds care coordinators and community navigators to provide a more family-centered approach to addressing student health needs. While most schools will have a nurse 40 hours per week, those schools with 32 hours or 24 hours of nursing coverage will also receive eight or 16 hours, respectively, of a certified nursing assistant or health technician (Allied Health Professional) to ensure their health suite will be open and fully staffed for 40 hours per week. In addition to the proposed staffing plan for the start of school year 2017-18, which is being released today, DOH will provide each school with additional school-specific health information and will work with schools around any questions related to their students' health needs. The model is flexible, and coverage can be adjusted to accommodate changes to student health needs.

We know that you, your staff, and your families will have questions about these plans. We will be using the next two months to identify opportunities for various groups of stakeholders to share their voices in collaboration with DOH and DBH. In the meantime, visit: <https://dmhhs.dc.gov/publication/school-mental-health-program-and-school-health-services-program> to view the plans and email shs.program@dc.gov with your questions. The health and well-being of our students is of critical importance to us and the driving force behind these programmatic shifts. We look forward to working with you to implement the new programs and expand high-quality health and behavioral health services across the District.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Niles', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Jennifer Niles

Deputy Mayor for Education

