

How school-based health centers keep kids healthy

By James Miller

As parents and educators, we all want the best for our children. One of the most effective ways to support their growth and development is to make sure they stay healthy, especially during their school years.

A healthy child is better equipped to focus on their studies and participate fully in school activities. When students are in good health, they are less likely to miss school and more likely to engage in their education. Creating a supportive environment at school is not just better for their health but essential for learning.

One effective way to integrate health services into the educational setting is to establish school-based health centers (SBHCs). These clinics, usually located in the school building, provide a range of medical services that are crucial for maintaining student health. RiverStone Health currently has two SBHCs in Orchard Elementary School and Medicine Crow Middle School.

Benefits of school-based health care

- **Immediate access to care:** Our SBHCs offer on-site health care services including physical exams, vaccinations and urgent care for minor illnesses and injuries. This immediate access helps students avoid lengthy absences and makes sure that health issues are addressed before they get worse.
- **Chronic disease management:** For students with chronic conditions like asthma, diabetes, anxiety, depression and ADHD, regular monitoring and management are crucial. SBHCs provide ongoing care and support, which helps students manage these conditions and avoid multiple absences for appointments.
- **Mental health support:** Mental health is as important as physical health. Both of our current SBHCs offer counseling and support services to help students cope with stress, anxiety and other emotional challenges. Research shows that early intervention in mental health can improve academic performance and overall well-being.
- **Preventive services:** Preventive care, including health screenings and immunizations, is a major focus at both Orchard and Medicine Crow schools. By addressing potential health issues before they become serious problems, we can help students stay healthy and engaged in school.
- **Family engagement:** Both Orchard and Medicine Crow SBHCs work closely with families to provide comprehensive care. This partnership ensures that parents are involved in their child's health care, helping to bridge any gaps between home and school care.

Coming soon

RiverStone Health will be opening a new SBHC in Billings Senior High School later this year. This clinic will offer medical and mental health services to all students in the school as well as school faculty and staff.

While our staff provide direct health care for children, parents and guardians are just as important in keeping them healthy. Encourage your child to stay active, participate in after-school activities, try sports or join clubs. You can also get them involved in after-school care programs. It is also important to teach your child proper hygiene to keep them healthy.

Be sure to care for their mental health too – check in with your child to see how they are doing, who their friends are and what they are doing in their spare time to ensure they safe and happy.

Together, we can set kids up for success.

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