

Legislation to codify school-based health centers passes first committee

Written by gallupsun
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The New Mexico Department of Health applauded the bipartisan passage of Senate Bill 397 from the Senate Education Committee to codify school-based health centers in New Mexico law. It now moves to the Senate Health and Public Affairs Committee. The bill is sponsored by Sen. Nancy Rodriguez and Rep. Christine Trujillo.

“When students are healthy, they are able to learn, grow and thrive,” Dr. Laura Parajon, Deputy Secretary for the New Mexico Department of Health, said. “We are committed to bringing healthcare where children are and school-based health centers provide access to students who might not have otherwise gotten care.”

School based health centers have operated in New Mexico for over 25 years. SB 397 is critical to ensuring the integrity and sustainability of SBHCs in New Mexico over time and ensures the DOH will continue to work with school districts interested in providing access to primary care and behavioral health services to children who need it.

“Students can’t do their best learning when they’re sick or experiencing depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges whether they stem from problems at home, loss of loved ones, bullying, harassment, or something else,” Rodriguez said. “School-based health centers provide critical primary and mental health services to vulnerable youth and to their families.”

DOH 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 DOH SBHC model includes provision of both primary and behavioral health care, delivered in clinics on or adjacent to school campuses in 24 counties.

SB 397 directs the DOH to provide funding, technical assistance, and other necessary support for the creation and operation of school-based health centers.

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School-based health centers will provide primary health care, preventive health care, treatment of minor, acute and chronic conditions, mental health care, substance use disorder, crisis intervention and referrals for additional treatment including inpatient care, specialty care, emergency psychiatric care, oral health care and vision health care services. SBHCs address many of the barriers to health care access for school-aged children. Because SBHCs are located where children spend a significant amount of their time, access to care is maximized.

“School-based health centers provide easy, convenient access to care for students, and reduce the logistical and financial burdens on working parents trying to accommodate medical appointments,” Trujillo said. “These on-site facilities deliver vital primary care and preventative services, as well as mental and behavioral health care, all of which are critical to the well-being, and educational success of our school-aged children.”

