

What you need to know: School Based Health Centers

What are school based health centers?

School based health centers are based in K-12 schools and provide “wrap-around” services for students. These services are often established in economically disadvantaged communities and include both primary and comprehensive care options. They are branded as providing a range of services, including mental health care, social services, dentistry, and health education. Our partner organization, Parents Defending Education, has also uncovered examples of school based health centers [providing students access](#) to “gender-affirming care,” contraception, and abortions.

What’s the issue?

Nearly 1,100 school districts have policies that say parents may not be notified about their child’s decision to live as another gender identity at school, according to [Parents Defending Education](#). While school-based health centers can provide important medical services for children, it’s vital that schools install proper safeguards for parental consent regarding their child’s medical care.

When they say...	You can say...
You lack compassion for trying to take these essential medical services away from students.	Students deserve to have access to essential medical and dental services. The debate here is not about whether these programs need to be dismantled, but it is about ensuring there are necessary guardrails to mandate that parents are signing off on every medical decision involving their child.
What if a parent is not supportive of the appointments and procedures these centers are providing and students fear for their safety if their parents find out?	Unless there is clear evidence of abuse, which schools are required by law in every state to report, government-run schools should not be in the business of dictating how a parent decides to raise their child. Parents have a right to be informed of every medical decision involving their underage children. Any health center located in schools should have a requirement to mandate parent-sign off on every decision.
If a student does not get services they need, this could spiral into a mental health situation.	School administrators should not be making health decisions on behalf of other people’s children. There is great risk that can come from If children are going to receive medical services at a taxpayer-funded school-based health center, parents should be informed.

Examples: Read [Parents Defending Education’s School Based Health Centers Report](#).

The San Lorenzo School Based Health Center offers students access to “gender affirming care” including “chest binders, shape wear, etc.,” “information and counseling about transitioning,” “gender-affirming hormone therapy” and more.

The Evanston Township High School Health Center provides gynecologic care, vaccinations, mental health services, reproductive services, and STI testing and treatment. The school’s student newspaper published an article, “Getting comfortable with contraception,” in September 2022, which stated that the “hub of reproductive care and information at ETHS” is “right next to your algebra class.”

The Multnomah County Health Department, which services nine schools, has students age 12-17 fill out its “Adolescent Health Assessment.” The assessment asks minors if they “understand confidentiality (privacy)” regarding their health information; the legal age of consent for medical services without parental involvement in Oregon is 15 years old.