

TITLE: School-Based Health Centers and Mental Health During a Pandemic: A Qualitative Analysis of SBHC Coordinators and Educator Partners

AUTHOR(S): Suzy Pappas (Fly), Kaitlin Yeomans, Rachel Springer, Xuan Dinh, Dara Shifrer

PRESENTER(S): Suzy Pappas (Fly), Kaitlin Yeomans, Rachel Springer, Xuan Dinh, Dara Shifrer

STUDENT SUBMISSION: Yes

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Topic: SBHCs providing mental health services. Target Audiences: We aim to reach public health policy makers, program developers, and researchers.

ABSTRACT: Background: School-based health centers (SBHCs) are an innovative means of providing health resources to underserved student populations, but the events of the COVID-19 pandemic threatened service delivery capacity just as youth's needs for mental health services skyrocketed. Purpose and methods: Drawing on interviews with nearly half of the SBHC coordinators in Oregon (n=17) and 17 of their educator partners, we investigate the challenges SBHCs face in delivering mental health services, and how that shifted as a result of the pandemic. Results: Our findings indicate that youth continue to feel stigma around seeking mental health services, and that innovations that resulted from the pandemic (e.g., telehealth, staff-sharing) both improved and reduced youth access to SBHC mental health services. Conclusions: The findings from this study demonstrate the centrality of SBHCs for public health more broadly, and detail how Oregon SBHCs specifically met youth's mental health needs during the pandemic by integrating established best practices with innovative and flexible approaches, approaches that are likely to endure beyond the pandemic.

OBJECTIVE(S): Describe how SBHCs met youth's mental health needs during the pandemic by integrating established best practices with innovative and flexible approaches.
