

To Whom it May Concern,

Please allow me to express my views as both a longtime employee of the School-Based Health Center and also as a parent in the community. I have been a practicing Licensed Clinical Social Worker for almost 25 years. I have worked in different settings and different states. My primary role, currently and for the past 15 years, is that of an SBHC clinician. It is my job to provide long and short-term psychotherapy to students and families, as well as crisis intervention, referral, and coordination of care with the staff at the school I am located in (Danbury High School). I work with so many wonderful youngsters with a wide range of psychopathologies and treatment needs. I feel that SBHC presence in the building allows expeditious treatment and on the spot coordination with school personnel. The latter is a more time consuming process with my private practice patients, I can tell you. Living in a state where suicide rates of teens is practically at an epidemic rate of nearly one per day (these are deaths, not attempts), I cannot stress enough the importance of having trained medical and mental health personnel available. For families who have treatment barriers such as finances, transportation, insurance or language, we are here. For students whose parents will sign the permission slip however do not "buy into" the idea of mental health treatment, we are here. To keep us here and, equally important, to keep staff-competent and experienced staff- here, hours cannot be cut. Salaries must be competitive. In addition, imagine the convenience, for example, of a student who feels ill--perhaps a bad cough, sore throat, or asthma attack to be able to be treated onsite by a Nurse Practitioner and return to the classroom. Learning is not interrupted in the same way as if the school nurse would have to call a parent to pick up the student and hope to get a doctor's appointment. Some mental health and medical needs that are of a particularly private nature might not be addressed at all if a student feared disclosing to a parent or school nurse. Here they are safe to do so and they can be helped or referred as needed.

I thank you for your time.

Most Sincerely,
Karen London, MSW, LCSW
(Karen London-Le Blanc, Danbury parent.)