



## Government of the District of Columbia

John A. Wilson Building | 1350 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Suite 223 | Washington, DC 20004

Re: School Health Services Program Update

Date: September 30, 2016

To: District of Columbia Public and Public Charter School Parents/Guardians

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District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and most DC public charter schools receive a variety of school health services through programs overseen by the DC Department of Health (DOH). These programs include school nursing, oral health services, and school-based health centers. You are receiving this notice to help explain how the School Nursing Program currently functions in District schools, to tell you about anticipated changes with the new School Health Services Program, and to invite you to join the Department of Health and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) for an upcoming community forum to learn more.

### **Current School Nursing Program**

Nurses play a number of roles in the school building such as assessing students with health complaints; administering medication and first aid; delivering some preventive and chronic care; and reviewing school health forms. Nurses work closely with school staff on each of these roles. Each school has staff trained to administer medication when the school nurse is not available, including during field trips and after-school programming. Schools also have school-wide procedures in place in the event of medical emergencies. The current School Nursing Program will remain in place through December 2016.

The current School Nursing Program has traditionally focused on staff coverage, rather than focusing on student needs and ensuring that children are healthy and ready to learn. As a result, nursing services have varied from school to school, without a formal mechanism to ensure a minimum standard of services and input from the school community, including parents. Additionally, while school health services are critical to support student learning, these services are part of a broader system of care and supports needed for children to thrive.

### **New School Health Services Program**

The School Health Services Program will replace the existing School Nursing Program as of January 2017. The goal of this program is to improve outcomes for students and better leverage school and community resources. Given the diversity in schools across the city, the model will take into account unique student and school needs, while providing quality and accessible services. In addition to the nursing services described above, the new program will focus on improved care coordination and the addition of community navigation services in schools. These additional services will make full use of school and community resources, engage families, and link students to the care they need. The new



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Program is based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model.

Under the new Program, registered nurses will continue to provide clinical care for all children with special health care needs who require daily medications or treatment. Additional health professionals and community navigators will work with families, schools, and students' primary medical providers to make sure students receive well-child exams and the preventive services they need to be healthy. The new Program will also include a process to ensure high quality service delivery, as well as a system for families and school staff to provide ongoing feedback on the program. Trained school staff will continue to protect the health and safety of students by administering medication, providing basic first aid, activating emergency medical response systems and collecting school health forms when school health service personnel are not available.

All schools will receive adequate school health services coverage to meet the needs of their students. Schools with a health suite meeting DOH's safety standards will continue to receive at least 20 hours of nursing coverage each week. Schools may receive more nursing coverage depending on the medical needs of the student population. Schools without an approved health suite can also now participate in the School Health Services Program through its community navigation service.

### Next Steps

DOH will continue to work with DC Public Schools, the DC Public Charter School Board, and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education throughout the fall to prepare for the new program. We expect to have school-specific information, such as projected staffing, to share with the community in November 2016. In the meantime, there will be opportunities to ask questions in community forums on October 5, 2016 at Paul Lawrence Dunbar Senior High School (101 N St, NW), and on October 17, 2016 at Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter School (2427 Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave, SE). Both forums will be from 6-8 pm. We encourage you to attend a forum if you have questions about the new program.

Your child's health and well-being are incredibly important to us. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Department of Health at [shs.program@dc.gov](mailto:shs.program@dc.gov) or call 202-442-9411. Additional information will be made available on the OSSE and DOH websites ([osse.dc.gov](http://osse.dc.gov) and [doh.dc.gov](http://doh.dc.gov)).