

Health Services

The provision of **Health Services (HS)** within schools helps students lead physically healthy lives. This analysis explores the availability of health services in the school building, as well as policies and plans around the care for chronic health conditions. Access to care, preventive health screenings, and plans to care for chronic conditions, when carried out by qualified health professionals, help keep students healthy and ready to learn.

How are health services addressed in state law?

- **While 45 states address school-based health services, they do so in different ways.** Twenty-six states' laws address access to a school district physician for health assessments or provide a list of services to be provided to students with specific health needs. Nineteen states' laws address the development of on-campus health centers or clinics for student use.
- **Every state has a law that requires vaccinations for school-aged children.** However, laws in 48 states allow for waivers from vaccination requirements for personal, moral, or religious reasons.
- **Although 36 states' laws address the availability of school nurses on campus at some time during the school day or some days of the week, only one state (VT) requires a nurse on every campus every day that students are present.** Having a nurse available when a student becomes injured or ill can greatly improve access to care; these health issues occur whether a nurse is available or not.
- **Health screenings vary by grade level and type of screening, with dental screenings addressed in law (24 states) less frequently than vision (41 states) and hearing (34 states) screenings.** Thirty-three states address referrals for follow-up care after a student fails a vision, hearing, or dental screening.
- **Every state addresses caring for students with chronic health conditions.** However, specifics related to diabetes plans (35 states) are addressed less often than asthma (47 states) and allergy plans (49 states).

Figure 1. North Dakota is the only state that covers less than one-third of health services topics examined.

Comprehensiveness of policies promoting health services in schools, by state

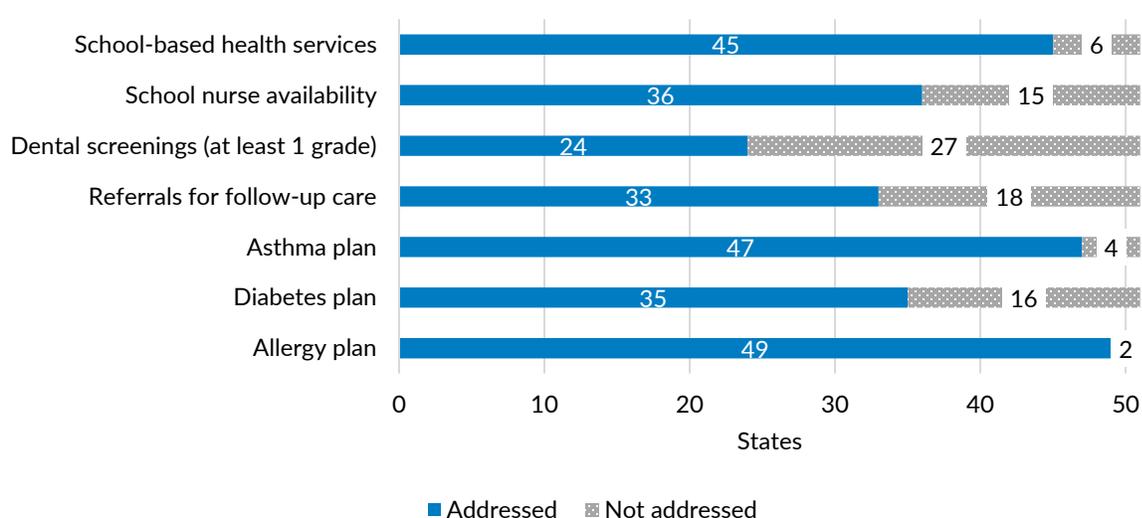


*This map shows states that have [◇] **comprehensive** (31), [△] **moderate** (19), and [□] **low** (1) coverage of health services topics in statutes and regulations governing education.*

How comprehensively do states cover health services?

- **Only six states lack policies addressing school-based health services** Fewer states provide referrals for follow-up care (33 states) or require dental screenings in at least one grade (24 states).
- **Most states' laws address at least a moderate number (range: 38 percent to 69 percent) of health services topics examined for this analysis.** However, North Dakota's law is limited in the health services domain (only addressing 31 percent of topics examined).

Figure 2. Number of States Covering Selected Health Services Topics



Child Trends, in partnership with The Institute of Health Research and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago and EMT Associates, Inc., examined the extent to which 11 healthy schools domains are addressed in state policy. These domains include the 10 components of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model: Health Education; Physical Education and Physical Activity; Nutrition Environment and Services; Health Services; Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services; Social and Emotional Climate; Physical Environment; Employee Wellness; Family Engagement; and Community Involvement. An additional domain, the WSCC References domain, addresses the extent to which state laws include explicit references to the WSCC model or similar language, such as the Center for Disease Control and Preventions' Coordinated School Health model.

This sub-brief provides an overview of how state policies cover the Health Services domain. Sub-briefs covering the other domains as well as the compiled report can be found on the [Child Trends website](#). Definitions of each of the 16 topics are provided in the Appendix of the compiled report. Data from all topics are available through the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) [State Policy Database on School Health](#).