



Dear Education Leaders,

In response to recent inaccurate information disseminated by others, we would like to provide clarity about the purpose of School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) and laws passed earlier this year. SBHCs have operated in New Mexico for more than 25 years.

SBHCs play a vital role in providing accessible care to young New Mexicans, with 35% of all visits focused on behavioral healthcare. This is critical considering the rising trends of anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation among adolescents, both locally and nationally, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, 25% of SBHC users express that they would have resorted to emergency rooms or urgent care if not for the services offered by SBHCs, incurring significantly higher expenses. Additionally, 12% of SBHC users indicate that they would have forgone care altogether.

SBHCs do not provide abortions or gender-affirming care. They can provide referrals and emotional support to students undergoing these difficult topics, but it is solely up to the students and, if considered underage by law, their consenting adults, as to how they choose to move forward with these sensitive personal issues.

The notification and consent school form offered to parents by the New Mexico House Republicans does not have any legal effect. We encourage you to read the bills cited in their letter, [HB 7](#) and [SB 397](#).

It is crucial to note that parental consent is generally required for a student to receive care, including at a SBHC, unless a federal or state statute specifies otherwise. In 2015, there were a few exceptions made to the law that mainly pertain to family planning and pregnancy.

There is also misinformation being spread about the risk assessment used at SBHCs. When students are seen at a SBHC, they fill out a comprehensive health intake form that addresses their healthcare requirements and social practices to identify a wide range of behaviors, including those related to reproductive health and mental wellbeing. Questions are added as health risks are identified. The results of the assessment serve as a conversation starter between the provider and the student, assisting them in navigating health-related inquiries, especially sensitive topics.

Contact either of us if you or your staff have any questions or concerns. We are here to assist you and, most importantly, support our students and families.

Thank you,

Secretary Arsenio Romero, Public Education Department
Secretary Patrick Allen, Department of Health