

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) as Potential Partners

What is an FQHC?

Federally Qualified Health Centers, or FQHCs, are community-based non-profit organizations that provide care to patients regardless of ability to pay, charging reduced fees to those who are uninsured or underinsured. Organizations receive designation as an FQHC by the federal government, and receive grant funding and other benefits to assist with the provision of care to those who lack access to needed health services.

FQHCs have federally-defined service areas, made up of the zip codes they serve. Missouri has 29 FQHCs, whose collective service areas cover most of the state. FQHCs can register school sites with the federal government so that they qualify as locations where the FQHC provides ongoing health care services.

What services can an FQHC offer a school district?

FQHCs provide comprehensive services, including medical, dental, and behavioral health care, as well as access to lower-cost pharmaceuticals through the 340b program and malpractice coverage under the Federal Tort Claims Act. In addition to ongoing federal funding, FQHCs receive enhanced reimbursement for patients enrolled in Medicaid and Medicare in order to assist with the costs of providing care to patients. Additionally, health centers are tasked with assisting patients to access needed health care services through providing enabling services such as transportation, case management, and assistance seeking needed health care or other resources.

FQHCs can serve as strong partners for school health services. Some of the biggest benefits of partnering with an FQHC to provide school health services include the potential for financial sustainability without extensive financial inputs from the district and the comprehensiveness of services FQHCs can provide.

What steps should a school take if interested in working with an FQHC?

You may already know the FQHC that provides care in your area. If not, you can find the closest health center by entering the address of your school or community into the following website, <https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/>. You will want to initiate a conversation with the FQHC to determine their interest and ability to provide services in your district, and work to determine an approach that works well for both the district and the FQHC.

You should discuss the services you are seeking and the services they are able to provide. The program you develop may be as simple as a therapist providing care a few hours a week to a comprehensive school health center, with medical, dental, and behavioral health services provided on-site to your students, their families, and school staff.