

New Guidance Highlights High Impact Opportunities to Support Healthy Students

U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services release joint letter and toolkit addressing critical link between health and education

In a new letter sent today to governors, chief state school officers, state health officials and state Medicaid directors, the U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Health and Human Services (HHS) recognize the critical role that healthcare coverage and health services play in ensuring all students are ready and able to learn, and recommend action steps to better coordinate health and education services for all students and their families.

ED and HHS also released a new toolkit that details five high impact opportunities for states and local school districts to support stronger communities through collaboration education and health sectors, highlighting best practices and key research in both areas.

“Healthy students are better learners and better positioned to thrive in school and later in life,” said Acting Secretary John King. “The opportunities we highlight in our new toolkit are happening already in some schools, but we need more action. Our hope is this call to action is a new day for collaboration. We need more schools, more districts and more states to take advantage of existing channels and opportunities to create healthy opportunities for their students.”

“There is no more important work — as parents and as a society — than helping our young people succeed. And the twin priorities that are the foundation of their success, their health and their education, are inextricably linked,” said Acting HHS Deputy Secretary Mary K. Wakefield, Ph.D., R.N. “So we are proud to continue our work with our federal partners and the heroes working in our nation’s communities every day to get kids covered. We’re getting the word out that there are just a few weeks left to enroll in the Health Insurance Marketplace and that enrollment in Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program are open year round. Working even more closely together, we can make sure our children achieve their best — and do their best learning — every day.”

The letter calls on state and local educational agencies to increase access to health insurance and healthcare, such as through school enrollment forms. The letter also encourages creating school environments with the physical and mental health supports to help students succeed academically and lead healthier lives, like through a school-based health clinic. Further, the letter recommends strengthening coordination and collaboration among education and health systems at the local and state levels, such as through key partnerships with nonprofit community hospitals.

King announced the new toolkit and letter at a roundtable event in Houston, Texas, with Acting [HHS Deputy Secretary Mary Wakefield](#), the highest ranking nurse in the Obama administration. At the event, “Healthy Students, Promising Futures: Creating Stronger Communities Through Collaboration,” stakeholders from across the education and health spectrum echoed the urgent need for more and better coordination and collaboration and cited examples of ways that the Houston Independent School District has successfully partnered with health agencies to improve student achievement and health.

Research strongly suggests that when young people receive necessary and preventive health care and have health insurance, their academic, health, and other important life outcomes improve. For example, one recent study found that children who gained access to Medicaid as a result of expanded coverage miss fewer school days due to illness or injury and are more likely to do better in school, finish high school, graduate from college and earn more as adults.

As a result of the [Affordable Care Act](#), many more students and their families are now eligible to obtain insurance through Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program, or a Qualified Health Plan in the Health Insurance Marketplace. Additionally, recent changes in policy at HHS have expanded the opportunity for states and local school district to provide Medicaid reimbursable health services at and

through schools, which are trusted places for parents and families to receive information and services for their children.

The letter and toolkit are available at www.ed.gov/healthystudents. For additional enrollment information visit: www.healthcare.gov.