



# NASW

National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

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6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM  
ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR  
DPH & DMHAS BUDGETS

Appropriations Committee

February 23, 2021

Submitted By: Stephen Wanczyk-Karp, LMSW

The National Association of Social Workers, CT chapter calls for increased funding in the Department of Public Health's budget for school-based health centers. SBHC's are a proven, effective service system that provides physical, mental and in some clinics dental care to children who would otherwise go without health care services. Successful programs that are working as intended and include preventative measures that save the state dollars should be given priority for increased funding to the fullest extent possible.

According to the National Mental Health Association, less than 1 in 5 of the 12.5 million children in need of mental health services actually receive them. Many of these children will not achieve academic success due to social, emotional and behavioral problems affecting school performance. SBHC's help these students through means of prevention, early identification, intervention, counseling and support. Especially in both urban and rural communities where many families do not have access to affordable mental health care it is the SBHC's clinical social worker or other mental health provider that meets the child's mental health needs.

For many students the SBHC is the only health and mental health service available to them. Comprehensive SBHC's offer mental health treatment, address acute conditions, provide preventive medical exams, treat injuries, offer oral health care, provide follow-up on chronic conditions and offer health education. Other SBHCs are mental health focused, working with children to cope with the stresses and behavioral issues that impede their ability to learn within the classroom setting. These are services that benefit the student, the student's family, teachers and the school system by having a healthier student body. For many of the students participating in the SBHC programs, the SBHC is the only medical care they receive.

Approximately 50% the students seen in SBHC's are there for behavioral health treatment. The need for mental health services is on the rise due to the pandemic and CT is looking at a tsunami of mental health needs coming from the pandemic. SBHC's play a key role in delivery of mental health for children and with mental health needs growing an expansion of SBHC's is critically need.

School based health clinics support student health and student learning. They enhance the funds spent on education by assisting students to succeed in school. SBHCs have a long track record of unquestionable success. SBHC's provide services in a cost-effective manner that saves money through delivery of preventative health care. We strongly urge that they receive greater funding than in the Governor's budget, thus allowing for expansion of the number of communities served.

We urge the Appropriations Committee to increase funding in DMHAS for the expansion of Crisis Intervention Teams. These teams work in collaboration with law enforcement in responding to mental health related emergency calls.

Police are not social workers. This may seem an obvious statement but it begs the question why are we dispatching police officers in response to situations that call for a social work intervention? Issues of drug use, homelessness, mental illness, non-violent domestic disputes, landlord/tenant disagreements and related social service issues too frequently lead to police responses. Tragically, as we have seen over and over, these calls lead to escalation instead of peaceful resolution and particularly when persons of color are involved harmful outcomes.

Expansion of the Crisis Intervention Teams to be statewide 24/7 will assist police departments throughout the State. This will be especially the case in smaller municipalities that do not have the resources to directly employ, or contract with a community-based agency, for behavioral services provided by social workers.

Throughout the country there is a growing movement to employ clinical social workers for certain 911 calls. The Appropriations Committee can through the budget join in this national movement by expansion of DMHAS's Crisis Intervention Teams. There is a recognized need for greater utilization of social workers for mental health emergency calls for which increased funding within DMHAS can begin to address.