

School-Based Health Center Questions Every Parent Should Ask

Before signing any paperwork for a School-Based Health Center (SBHC), parents deserve full transparency. Use these questions to guide conversations with your school and to protect your right to informed consent.

1. What exactly am I consenting to?

Many SBHCs use broad “blanket consent” forms at the start of the school year. These forms may allow providers to administer vaccines, prescribe medications, offer reproductive or mental health counseling, and conduct screenings without further notice to you. Parents should request a copy of the form, cross out any services they do not agree to, and sign only for limited care (e.g., first aid only).

2. Will I be notified every time my child receives care?

Parents should insist on notification—written or by phone—every time their child receives care beyond routine first aid. Some SBHCs provide treatments or counseling sessions without notifying parents. Ask your school for a written policy guaranteeing that you will always be informed.

3. Who are the providers, and what are their credentials?

SBHCs may employ physicians, nurse practitioners, mental health counselors, dentists, and social workers. Many are outside contractors, not school staff. Parents should request names, qualifications, and the organizations employing these providers. Ask who oversees them and how complaints or concerns are handled.

4. Can my child be treated without my permission?

In some states with ‘minor consent’ laws, children as young as 11–12 may legally consent on their own to vaccines, mental health services, reproductive care, or even gender-related services. This means your child could be treated without your knowledge or approval. Ask your school what state laws apply and demand to be included in all decision-making.

5. How is my child’s health information stored and shared?

SBHCs operate under a mix of HIPAA and FERPA regulations, which can allow health data to be shared between schools, healthcare providers, and sometimes state agencies. Parents should ask how records are stored, who has access, and if they can view all notes and records. Insist on written guarantees that your child’s information will not be shared without your consent.

 **Tip:** Always request copies of everything you sign, and consider filing a Non-Consent Form to limit care to emergency first aid only unless you are present.