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## BARRIERS to establishing partnerships

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Developing or strengthening a partnership between a primary care site and a school-based health center (SBHC) can improve adolescents’ access to health services while decreasing fragmentation and redundancy, leading to better health outcomes. However, effectively implementing this partnership can be challenging. Some providers or health centers may feel that such a partnership will threaten their autonomy, creating possible resistance. Communication and collaboration between the two sites can also be hindered by differing viewpoints, modes of communication, and services offered. Additionally, patients may be uncertain or unaware of the partnership and thus not take full advantage of what it has to offer.

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## STRATEGIES for establishing a partnership

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### Establish rapport between staff and providers at both sites.

- Schedule one or more gatherings, retreats, or “meet and greets” so that staff and providers from both sites can get to know each other and develop a sense of trust and reliance.
  - Use this meeting as an opportunity to learn about the services available at each of the different sites.
- Consider doing e-mail introductions for key staff members with bios and why they are passionate about caring for young people.
- The two sites can share their contact information, ideally with pictures, roles, and e-mail addresses/phone numbers to facilitate communication.

### Work together during the planning process.

- Create a team with staff and providers from both sites to outline specific guidelines/strategies for communicating with each other.
- Multiple strategies may be needed – urgent questions or concerns may require a direct method such as a page or phone call, while more routine communications may be sent through the electronic health record, by fax, or by mail.
- Discuss specific ways that complementary care can be provided for shared patients. For example, a patient seen at a primary care site for an asthma exacerbation could receive follow-up, spirometry, and reinforcement of the asthma care plan at the school-based health center.

### Communicate with families of shared patients.

- Send a letter to the families of shared patients that explains that the PCP is meant to be the primary source of care, but that the SBHC is an alternative when needed. See a sample letter on page 3.
- Explain to patients and families that staff and providers from both sites communicate with each other and work together to provide complementary care.
  - Send an additional letter to patients at the SBHC outlining the services offered on-site, while also encouraging families to either (1) sustain their relationship with their PCP or (2) establish a connection with the partnered PCP if they do not have a PCP.

If you have a shared EHR, use it as a tool to coordinate care.

- Encounter notes and messages can be routed to providers at the partnering site to quickly communicate about co-managed patients – this can help reduce redundant care, and make sure the PCP and SBHC providers are aware of what is happening with their shared patient.
- The EHR can act as a means of determining any shared patients who are missing one or more recommended services (quality measures), such as missing immunizations, asthma action plans, or chlamydia screening.
- To close these gaps in care, those patients unable or unwilling to see their PCP could be scheduled at the SBHC. Meeting recommended health services not only ensures that patients get the care they need, it can also equate to increased revenue for the PCP from insurance companies and health systems.

Additional RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review the AAP [Policy Statement](#)<sup>1</sup> on School-Based Health Centers and Pediatric Practice.
- Read the JABFM [article](#)<sup>2</sup> on the “Expanded Medical Home.”

SAMPLE FAMILY LETTER FOR SHARED PATIENTS FROM SBHC SITE

[DEPT. LOGO]

[DEPT. HEADER]

[DATE]

Dear Parents and/or Guardians,

The health of your child is important to us! Your primary care provider (PCP) should be their main source of care and the PCP office is your child’s medical home. However, sometimes you may not be able to take them to their PCP for an appointment. The [SBHC] clinic is an alternative for follow-up care, minor health concerns during the school day, and immunizations. [SBHC] also partners with community resources to provide on-site vision and dental services. [SBHC] works together with your child’s PCP to take the best care of your child while keeping them in school as much as possible.

Annual physical exams (also called well child checks or sports physicals) are one important way to keep your child healthy. We recommend that annual physicals be performed at your child’s PCP’s office. If you are unable to see your PCP, physicals are available at [SBHC].

If you do not have a PCP for your child, [SBHC] has partnered with the [PCP Site] which has [specialty] doctors. [PCP Site] is accepting new patients ages 0-17. For more information on the [PCP Site] you may call [PCP Site phone number] or visit their website at [PCP website address].

Sincerely,

[Name – Medical Director]

Medical Director, [SBHC Site]

[Name – Medical Director]

Medical Director, [PCP Site]

Patient Name: @NAME@

MRN: @MRN@

DOB: @BDAY@

SAMPLE PATIENT LETTER FOR SHARED PATIENTS FROM SBHC SITE

[DEPT. LOGO]

[DEPT. HEADER]

[DATE]

Dear [Patient],

We are sending you this letter because your health is important to us! Our records show that your primary care doctor is at [PCP Site], and you are also registered to be seen at the [SBHC] clinic at your school. Both [PCP Site] and [SBHC] clinics are part of the [Health System].

[PCP Site] is your medical home, and your primary care doctor is meant to be your main source of health care. However, sometimes you may not be able to come to [PCP Site] for an appointment, and the [SBHC] clinic is an alternative for follow-up care, minor health concerns during the school day, and immunizations. Your doctor at [PCP Site] will work with the staff at [SBHC] to coordinate your care and provide needed services.

Sincerely,

[PCP Name]

[Name – Medical Director]

Medical Director, [PCP Site]

[Name – Medical Director]

Medical Director, [SBHC Site]

Patient Name: @NAME@

MRN: @MRN@

DOB: @BDAY@

<sup>1</sup> <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/129/2/387>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.jabfm.org/content/29/3/339.short>