



School Social Work Association of America
Resolution Statement

ADVOCATING FOR THE MEDICAID SCHOOL-BASED SERVICES PROGRAM

The School Social Work Association of America is strongly supportive of the Medicaid School-Based Services program. This program helps to defray some of the rapidly increasing costs of delivering health care services to students in special education, including the critically important mental health services provided by school social workers. Threatened cuts to Medicaid funding would have a severe impact on our nation's most vulnerable students and shift a substantial financial burden to state education budgets and local school districts. Schools will continue to be required by law to ensure that children get the services they need to learn and would be forced to cut back on other programs to offset the loss.

Since 1988, Medicaid has been authorized by Congress to reimburse for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)-related, medically necessary direct services, including school social work services, that are included in a student's Individual Educational Plan (IEP) or Individual Family Service Plan (ISFP). Medicaid-eligible students include children from low-income families and children who have been identified with serious and chronic health care needs (CSHCN). School districts also can obtain federal reimbursements for Medicaid outreach and certain administrative costs, including transportation, associated with providing these services. Medicaid reimbursements provide assistance to school districts already struggling with appropriations that have not kept pace with the "path to full funding" that was promised in the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004.

Schools are the settings in which children's mental and behavioral health needs are first identified and are well suited to facilitate access to and delivery of mental health services and behavioral interventions. Schools function as the de facto mental health system for many children and adolescents. Only one in four students who are in need of mental health care receive services. Seventy to eighty percent of those who do, receive them in the school setting, often provided by school social workers.

Proposed cutbacks to the School-Based Services program run counter to the statutory provisions governing the Medicaid program. These provisions have been affirmed by Congress in support of providing comprehensive, high quality care to children, to improve their health status and ability to learn. These children benefit most when they have access to routine care.

SSWAA supports the continuation of the School-Based Services program as a vital source of funding for the provision of mental health care and school social work services. Additionally, SSWAA encourages nonparticipating states and school districts to consider accessing reimbursement through the SBS program, potentially increasing their ability to meet students' mental health needs.

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