

Student Health Initiative

Background

January 2006

In 1999, government announced the Student Health Initiative (SHI) as one of the priorities of the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI)*. Developed through a partnership between Alberta Education, Health and Wellness, Children's Services and the Alberta Mental Health Board, the SHI is intended to build partnerships that strengthen the capacity to support students with special health needs.

Goal

The goal of the SHI is to improve access to, and enhance the provision of, a range of integrated health and related support services for children with special health needs, so they can participate fully in their education programs to reach their potential and be successful at learning. This includes children registered in school programs from Early Childhood Services through Grade 12 who have:

- physical disabilities
- developmental disabilities
- neurological disorders
- sensory impairments
- medical conditions
- emotional/behavioural disabilities

Eligible Services

Services eligible under the SHI include:

- speech-language therapy
- physical therapy
- occupational therapy
- audiology
- respiratory therapy
- clinical nursing
- emotional/behavioural supports

Partnerships

Local Student Health Partnerships, consisting of school authorities, the regional health authority including mental health, and the child and family services authority, work together to develop a joint service plan that identifies how they will respond to the special health needs of students within their region. Student Health Partnerships

* The ACYI is a collaborative partnership of government ministries working together on issues affecting children and youth. Partners include Children's Services, Education, Advanced Education, Health and Wellness (including AADAC and the Alberta Mental Health Board), Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Solicitor General, Human Resources and Employment, Community Development, Seniors and Community Supports and Justice and Attorney General.

collectively identify needs, set priorities, develop collaborative strategies for delivering services, and share accountability for the results achieved. This process results in an enhanced understanding of programs and services offered by other partners, which leads to greater integration and co-ordination, and ultimately better services for children.

The 2005/2006 school year marks the seventh year of operation for Student Health Partnerships. 16 Student Health Partnerships provide services across Alberta, with total funding of \$35.6 million, including \$440,000 for services for First Nations children who live on reserve and attend school off reserve.

Service priorities for the 2005/2006 school year include speech-language services and supports for children with emotional-behavioural difficulties. Occupational therapy, physical therapy, respiratory therapy, and clinical nursing care are also provided by some partnerships. It is anticipated that over 34,000 services will be provided to children across the province during the 2005/2006 school year.

Outcomes

Parents, Partnerships, and teachers have noted improved coordination of student health services since the inception of the Student Health Initiative (SHI).

- Parents indicate that the SHI has improved opportunities for their children to actively participate in school activities, their children's academic achievement, and their children's ability to meet educational goals. (
- Regional partners indicate that the SHI has resulted in important improvements in information sharing, service co-ordination, and accessibility of student health services.
- Teachers report student health services have improved their students' abilities to be successful at learning.

Initiative Partners

Alberta Education
Alberta Children's Services
Alberta Health & Wellness

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