



## SBHC Awareness Month Tool Kit

February 2007

12 Steps to a successful school-based health center tour for Elected Officials

**“Getting Elected Officials Out of the State House and into the School House”**

Are you interested in doing advocacy work, but the thought of it overwhelms you? Have you considered promoting your SBHC by inviting an elected official (i.e. legislator, mayor or council member) to visit or take a tour? It may seem like a challenging task, but it is easier than you think AND it is important.

Communicating with elected officials is essential in that it fosters good will, provides opportunities for media attention, increases visibility and has the ability to influence the decisions that elected officials make. Importantly, these decisions include how much funding is allocated in the state budget for school-based health centers.

Even if your legislator is supportive, you should consider conducting a tour of the SBHC. The more they know about your school-based health center and the more stories they hear from the students who seek services, the more elected officials can advocate for your school-based health center, and educate their peers about the importance of SBHCs.

With the collective experience of Jordan Hampton, Nurse Practitioner at Chelsea High School and Donna Coe, Nurse Practitioner at the Lynn Vocational Technical High School, we have created 12-steps for you to plan a successful tour for elected officials. Please note that there are many ways to plan a tour and this is just one example. Are you ready?

1. Look up the elected official for the city where your school is located. You can easily do this by going to <http://capwiz.com/nea/ma/state/main/?state=MA> and print out the information including address and phone number. (Note that this on-line tool provided by the MA Teacher’s Association requests that you place your zip code in the box and then will ask for your address or your school’s address.) You may know the elected official you would like to invite, but if you don’t try to have your first tour be with an elected official who is supportive of access to health care. It is also important to conduct a separate tour for each elected official.
2. Gather your thoughts about the school-based health center and how to approach your legislator. Obtain the latest SBHC fact sheet from the MA Coalition of School-Based Health Centers (in this toolkit), information on your SBHC, two or three potential dates for the tour to occur and write down what you would like to say to the legislator. (See an example conversation following these 12 steps.)

3. Call the elected official's office and make the request using the speech you have prepared. (You may also have a community member who has a connection with the elected official call to schedule the tour.)
4. Confirmation. Send the request in writing (if requested by the elected official's staff). Follow up with the scheduler/staff person. Confirm the date.
5. Let the school administration and SBHC administrative team know the date and time of the tour. (i.e. sponsoring agency executive director, SBHC administrator, school principal, school nurse, additional SBHC personnel)
6. Logistics - Identify whom you would like to participate in the event. Important people to consider include the school principal, school counselor, 1-2 teachers, SBHC administrator (community benefit programs, budget office, SBHC manager, external communications), SBHC NP, other SBHC personnel, parents and several students. Consult with your sponsor agency to determine the most appropriate to attend. Also consider whether or not you will have food and where that will take place.
7. Train the student or students who will be speaking so they are comfortable with what they want to say. You will want to encourage the students to write down what they would like to say and rehearse with you. Also, make sure you have a signed consent form from them to utilize any photos taken. (Photo Consent Form in toolkit.) Important points for the student to mention include:
  - How the SBHC has helped them.
  - Why it is important to have the SBHC in the school?
  - What are the services that are available?
  - Why do the students like to come to the SBHC? (Trust is usually mentioned)Students provide powerful affirmation of the need for school-based health centers. If the students can tell the elected official why the SBHC is important he/she may be very impressed and tell their fellow elected officials that they visited a SBHC and talked with students who need the services of the SBHC.
8. Prepare folders of information for the legislator and those attending the tour. In the folder include information about the SBHC be sure to include:
  - The SBHC fact sheet (included in this tool kit)
  - Your SBHC's marketing materials
  - A fact sheet about your SBHC that includes data (i.e. # patients; demographics serviced, services provided, insurance info, community agency referral info)
  - The SBHC FY07 budget fact sheet (included in this tool kit)
9. Prepare a press release of the event. Call the local paper to let them know of this photo opportunity. They will probably want something in writing so you can modify the press release for an elected official SBHC tour that is included in the tool kit. (See the press release in the toolkit.) Also, let the school newspaper know this event is happening so they can do their own article about the important visit.

10. Prepare the agenda/program for the day of the tour keeping these points in mind:
  - Make sure the SBHC and School Nurse waiting area is tidy
  - Have a table of refreshments ready (if applicable)
  - Have a student posted in front of school in the event the elected official is early. (You can look up a photo of the elected official in advance by doing a search of his/her name on the internet.)
  - Have the Nurse Practitioner and another school official (i.e. principal or his/her designee) greet the elected official at the main entrance of the school.
  - Lead the elected official on a tour of the SBHC.
  - Once everyone had convened at the school-based health center each individual present should introduce themselves to the elected officials and provide a point of reference as to how they associate with the school-based health center.
  - Make sure that there is a presentation by an adult to thank the elected official for taking the time to visit an essential point of health access for our students – our SBHC.
  - The Nurse Practitioner should share information about school-based health care in general and specifically the programs or services they provide. Be prepared to give some background on SBHC depending on how much knowledge the elected official may know. Remind the legislator that February is SBHC Awareness month.
  - Have a few students presentations as discussed in point #7.
  - Consider having a teacher speak to emphasize how the SBHC helps keep students healthy and in class. If teachers receive services in the SBHC definitely mention that too.
  - Consider having the SBHC/Sponsoring agency financial person talk about the state budget and how it is important that the state continue to fund SBHCs.
  - Allow time for questions and be prepared with two questions to ask the legislator. Be prepared for the elected official to ask both the adults and the students questions as well.
  - The entire event takes place in less than an hour.
11. Send thank you notes to the legislator and all other participants participated. Also, send one photo that you took to the media outlet (include when and where the meeting/tour took place as well as list the individuals in the photograph.)
12. Take a deep breath and give yourself a pat on the back!

### **Example scheduling conversation:**

**Legislative Office:** Representative Tierney's Office

**NP:** Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and the school where I work is in Representative Tierney's district. I'd like to speak with the appropriate person for scheduling the Representative/Senator/Congressman to visit our school's school-based health center.

**Legislative Office:** "You need to speak with \_\_\_\_\_, his/her scheduler, I'll put you through."

**Voicemail picks up:** "I'm not available, if you have a scheduling request, please submit your request in writing and either e-mail or fax to my attention."