



Definition for College Health Programs

Updated: April 2019

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The Lookout Mountain Group is updating its definition for College Health Programs from the organization's 2009 and 2017 reports. Both reports are available at our website.

A College Health Program describes the constellation of services, strategies, policies, and facilities an institution of higher education assembles to advance the health of its students. While some College Health Programs are also intended to provide extensive services for faculty and staff, most of the components are dedicated to providing services for eligible students.

On many campuses, College Health Programs are wholly focused on the provision of health care in the form of medical and mental/behavioral health care services and may include a variety of health care related services such as sports medicine services for intercollegiate athletes, student health insurance/benefit programs, crisis intervention, and public safety.

On many campuses clinical health care services are partnered with health promotion, which includes developing campus public health policy, creating a campus environment that supports healthy behaviors, community advocacy for healthy lifestyles, developing personal skills for better health and wellness, and encouraging clinical health care services to emphasize prevention along with curative services.

Components of a College Health Program

These service components may be provided by college or university entities, contracted entities, or collaboratively with governmental/community services.

- **Public Health** – Public health is the health of the population as a whole, especially as monitored, regulated, and promoted by the state. It is the science of protecting and improving the health of families and communities through promotion of healthy lifestyles, research for disease and injury prevention, and detection and control of infectious diseases. Overall, public health is concerned with protecting the health of entire populations. By definition, public health aims to provide the maximum benefit for the largest number of people. This may involve crisis response, health communications, threat assessment, immunization compliance policies, emergency preparedness, and surveillance for both communicable disease and health risk behaviors.

- **Health Care** – Health care is the efforts made to maintain or restore physical health by trained and licensed professionals or the maintenance and improvement of mental/behavioral health, especially through the provision of medical services.

- **Medical Services** – These involve, at a minimum, arrangements for individual primary and urgent care medical services that facilitate appropriate student access. Therapeutic and ancillary services for immunization, radiology, laboratory, pharmacy, sports medicine/physical therapy, and other services are routinely available.

- **Mental or Behavioral Health Services** – These involve crisis and short-term intervention services to address mental/behavioral concerns and diseases through the use of various types of therapies, which typically include individual and group psychotherapy, psychiatric services, and assessment for mental or



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behavioral health and substance use disorder conditions. Long-term care needs are identified and are generally referred to community providers (integration of community providers with SHIBP benefits is increasingly important). Many services include consultation to assist faculty and staff in identifying and assisting distressed students, outreach to the campus community members to destigmatize accessing services, psycho-educational, and other prevention services, including increasing students' resilience to commonly and appropriately occurring life challenges.

- **Student Health Insurance/Benefits Programs (SHIBPs)** – Most colleges and universities offer a SHIBP that provides coverage for medical and mental/behavioral health care not provided through on-campus services. Colleges are experiencing increasing need for SHIBPs due to cost shifting in employer-sponsored health insurance, both reduction of benefits and increased cost to employees for dependent coverage. Requiring health insurance as a condition of enrollment is often a key component to assure students have access to health care services beyond the scope and capabilities for on-campus services. Many campuses also have substantial charges for on-campus services and their SHIBPs are usually designed to cover these charges.

- **Health Promotion** – Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. To reach a state of complete medical, mental/behavioral, and social well-being (e.g., resilience building), an individual or group must be able to identify and realize aspirations, satisfy needs, and change or cope with the environment. Health Promotion initiatives include: creating supportive environments, building healthy public policy, strengthening community actions, developing personal skills, and reorienting health services toward prevention.

Additional Components – Other health-related services that are often included within a College Health Program include: services for students with disability, services for students with housing and/or food insecurity, services for sexual assault and misconduct survivors, special services for international students and students traveling abroad, dedicated clinics for care of children, collegiate recovery programs, supervision of campus-based emergency medical services, and occupational health services for specialized student populations such as students in the performing arts and health professionals students.