

**Press Release**  
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**Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Removes Key Barrier  
to Funding School Health Services**

**Chicago** – Yesterday, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) removed a key barrier to funding school health services. CMS issued a “guidance” stating that the so-called “free care” rule does not apply to schools, which means that schools may receive reimbursement funding from Medicaid for health services provided to Medicaid-eligible students. Healthy Schools Campaign and other advocates across the country have fought for this important change to increase students’ access to screenings and immunizations, as well as services related to asthma, diabetes and mental health, among others.

“This guidance by CMS helps address many of the health disparities that exist in communities across the country,” said Healthy Schools Campaign President and CEO Rochelle Davis. “Low-income and minority students are at increased risk of health issues that can hinder their learning. By allowing Medicaid funding to be available to more students, school health services can provide better care for the students who need it the most. This will help more students be healthy and ready to learn.”

The announcement came yesterday in a letter from the CMS Director Cindy Mann to state Medicaid directors, reading, in part: “We are issuing this guidance to ensure that Medicaid payment is allowed for any covered services for Medicaid-eligible beneficiaries. ... The goal of this new guidance is to facilitate and improve access to quality healthcare services and improve the health of communities.”

Prior to this announcement from CMS, the free care rule -- which states that Medicaid funds may not be used to pay for services that are available without charge to everyone in a community -- had been inappropriately applied to schools. As a result, school districts were denied reimbursement for health services provided to Medicaid-eligible students. The loss of funding led to a decrease in access to school health resources for low-income students.

For the past three years, Healthy Schools Campaign (HSC) has worked with other school health advocates to change the way school health services are funded and to reduce barriers that schools face when seeking reimbursement for health services. Today’s announcement by CMS is a big step toward HSC’s goal of ensuring that students have better access to health services as a key strategy toward improving student health and addressing education disparities.

Full text of the letter issued by CMS can be found here: [www.medicaid.gov/federal-policy-guidance/downloads/smd-medicaid-payment-for-services-provided-without-charge-free-care.pdf](http://www.medicaid.gov/federal-policy-guidance/downloads/smd-medicaid-payment-for-services-provided-without-charge-free-care.pdf)

**About Healthy Schools Campaign**

Healthy Schools Campaign (HSC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to making schools healthier places for all students. HSC believes that health and wellness should be incorporated into every aspect of the school experience. Founded in 2002, HSC advocates for children to have better access to nutritious school food, physical activity, school health resources and clean air to shape their lifelong learning and health. HSC facilitates collaboration between students, parents, teachers, administrators and policymakers to help prepare this diverse group of stakeholders to lead change for healthier schools at the school, district, state and national levels. For more information, visit HSC on the web at [healthyschoolscampaign.org](http://healthyschoolscampaign.org) or follow @healthyschools on Twitter.

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