



School - Based Services Program



OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES





School - Based Services Program



What is it?

The School Based Services Program is a partnership between OKDHS and a school to have an OKDHS employee stationed at the school. The purpose of this employee, a School-based Service Specialist, is to help students and their families who may be at risk or in crisis.

The School-Based Service Specialist works with the students and their families, providing preventive services and, if needed, applications for other OKDHS services. These services may include SoonerCare, TANF and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as Food Stamps). The SBSS also acts as a resource for the school and OKDHS.

What are the goals?

- Increase services to children
- Increase attendance of individual students
- Provide preventive services to families
- Increase development of positive relationships between home and school
- Reduce barriers to school and community services by families and staff
- Increase awareness and understanding of OKDHS services and regulations by school staff

How do I get started?

The process begins with discussion between the local school district and OKDHS of the benefits of the program to address the needs of their students and their families. Joint planning session(s) are held to discuss how the partnership will evolve and how the various complexities of the project will be addressed to include issues such as who provides equipment, who pays for travel, etc. These issues are addressed in writing as part of the formal agreement.

What resources are available or needed?

Many of the resources are the same as for any employee i.e., a place to office, access to a telephone, a computer, and basic furniture (chair, desk, etc.) The school is expected to provide office space, furniture and access to a telephone. OKDHS will provide the computer. However, the school is responsible for furnishing some type of broadband connectivity.

What are their duties?

The SBSS is a full-time out-stationed worker who is supervised by someone in the Human Services Center with input from a school official. The SBSS receives the same benefits as other OKDHS employees. Work assignments and work hours may vary depending on the needs of each school. However, the SBSS will work 40 hours per week, the same as other OKDHS personnel. During school breaks, extended holidays, and summer vacations, the SBSS reports to the Human Services Center if the school is closed. The SBSS will maintain contact with students and their families during the summer months when needed.

The actual work to be done by the SBSS may vary somewhat but generally includes the following tasks:

- Conducts home visits when requested or needed
- Provides access to an array of service needs, including OKDHS services
- Serves as the liaison between school officials, student/clients' families, and OKDHS
- Develops and participates in truancy programs
- Provides in-service to teachers and other school personnel
- Develops and facilitates parent education and support groups
- Participates in team staffing and client conferences

What will it cost to have an SBSS in the school?

The school and OKDHS share in the cost of the SBSS. The school(s) will provide the state dollar share of the cost, which is 50 percent of the total cost of the SBSS. The approximate cost to the school is \$26,000 per year. The estimated cost is based on the actual salary and benefits of the SBSS. For the first year, the agreement may begin at any time during the fiscal year, but will end on June 30. All second year agreements will be for 12 months.

Will the school have any input into the selection of the SBSS?

The SBSS will be selected by an interview which is conducted by representatives from the school and OKDHS. The ideal candidate will have experience in both Family Support Services and Child Welfare Services. The SBSS is viewed as a full service or comprehensive worker

Frequently asked questions

Can an SBSS be assigned to more than one school?

Yes. The number of schools depends on the agreement between OKDHS and the school, however, the increased workload could affect the quality of services.

Does the school play a role in supervising the SBSS?

Yes. The OKDHS supervisor should have monthly contact with the designated school official for feedback on staff performance. The school representative will provide direct input into the performance appraisal.

Can a school enter into a contract with OKDHS for less than a year?

Yes. The first contract can begin at any time during the year, but it will end at the end of the fiscal year (June 30). After that, the contract needs to be completed for a full year

Whose payroll is the SBSS on?

The SBSS is on the payroll of OKDHS. The OKDHS Finance Division will invoice the school at the end of each quarter for the cost of the employee.

If the school is unhappy with a person, can the school dismiss the person?

No. There should be a joint evaluation of the performance of the SBSS from the beginning and whatever solution is reached should be a joint decision between the school and OKDHS. The exception is if a serious problem arises, the school needs to contact the OKDHS County Director immediately to resolve the problem.

Does the SBSS continue to work for the school in the summer?

Yes. The SBSS needs to be fully engaged in the summer. They can follow up with students and families already identified as being at risk during the school year or develop programs for the students. The SBSS may fill in at the OKDHS county office during the summer if not fully engaged at the school.

Comments from Schools

“The success of our program is based on the people we have hired. Both of our SBSS people do an outstanding job for us and we are excited to have them on staff.”

Ben West, superintendent, Pawhuska Public Schools

“Over the last three years our school has had the privilege of having a school based service worker through DHS. This program adds new dimensions in the services we are able to offer our students and their families.”

Deborah Tennison, Prue High School principal

“In my opinion, this program is cost effective to our district.two full-time persons work in our schools to increase our district student attendance, which in turn has a positive affect on student academic achievement.”

Ben West, superintendent, Pawhuska Public Schools

“Oh my gosh!!! We could not live without one!”

“The school based service worker program has provided a wealth of information, assistance and training for the patrons of our school district. I would highly recommend this program for any school.”

Deborah Tennison, Prue High School principal

“Oh my gosh!!! We could not live without one!”

Janet Langdon, principal, Houston 4th & 5th grade center, Blackwell

“Wonderful!! They are a Godsend!”

Billie DeBoard, principal, Washington 2nd & 3rd grade center, Blackwell

“Our school based service specialist has been an invaluable asset to our school system. Serving as a bridge between parents, community and school, she can often identify a potential problem before it arises and partner with the family and school to alleviate the situation. Her duties and tasks are numerous and varied, but one thing stands clear, once fully engaged, the school based service specialist will prove to be a priceless tool to any school district.”

Brent Walden, superintendent, Stratford Public Schools

“I would highly recommend this program for any school.”

Colbert Public School is currently in its fourth year of collaborating with DHS in having a social worker at school. This has and is a positive experience for our school, staff, students, and community. Our social worker is very good at handling situations with parents that sometimes school officials are awkward in dealing with and it would ultimately wind up being handled by DHS anyway. Our lady works very well with school administrators in situations that require diplomacy and is better able to go in the home when we need to verify resident status or check on health issues. This program is very good for our school. I will say the program will only be as successful as the person hired to work, we are very fortunate to have that person.

Jarvis Dobbs, superintendent, Colbert Public School

“We can’t all be heroes like our school based social worker, because there wouldn’t be anyone left to bestow the accolades.” *Michael Kellogg, superintendent, Kiowa Public School*

“Our lady works very well with school administrators in situations that require diplomacy and is better able to go in the home when we need to verify resident status or check on health issues.”