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INTRODUCTION

Imagine an America where school-based health care is a mainstream idea — and the vast majority of lawmakers view properly funded school-based health care as essential to delivering a healthier America. **It’s an achievable dream that we all share, and all have a vital part in making real.**

The National Assembly of School Based Health Care (NASBHC) is building a strong bipartisan coalition to advance school-based health care legislation and funding, an enormous step towards making our dream a reality.

The challenge is that most lawmakers still don’t know — and don’t hear enough from their constituents — about the benefits of school-based health care. If they heard more, we could secure more support.

In the spirit of “All Politics is Local,” this packet aims to equip you with three tactics to help change this picture, and specifically:

- Engage, educate, and recruit lawmakers, organizations, and community leaders, to our cause by urging them to sign our school-based health care declaration.
- Connect school-based health care to current news in your local newspaper through letters to the editor and opinion editorials (OpEds), reaching the public and policymakers alike.
- Raise policy-maker awareness of school-based health care through strategically important candidate forums.

Over the past year NASBHC and the school-based health care field have made huge strides in building public awareness about the need for — and benefits of — school-based health centers.

As we approach the mid-term elections and beyond, we can fully utilize an enormous opportunity to have long-lasting, positive impact on lawmakers and candidates: Their education and mobilization will help deliver long term support for the school-based health care model.

Thank you for your partnership for positive change.

TACTIC ONE

Declaration Sign-On

Introduction

Educating Members of Congress about the benefits of school-based health centers in their districts is an integral part of NASBHC's strategy to build support for the model and for school-based health care legislation and funding.

To this end, we have created the school-based health care declaration — a document that outlines the benefits of school-based health centers. Organizations from the American Public Health Association to the National Association of State Boards of Education have already expressed their support for school-based health care by signing the declaration.

By securing the signatures of more local, state, and national organizations, we can build an even more powerful and visible partnership for change — that lawmakers can't ignore. In fact, by securing the signatures of candidates and lawmakers themselves, we can leverage even more impact when it comes to important school-based health care votes.

Just imagine being able to show local, state, and/or federal lawmakers a declaration that's signed by some of their districts' most influential stakeholders. The impact could be pivotal.

Three tactics to advance the issue of school-based health care in your area

Tips for Declaration sign-ons

Determine organizations to contact

To maximize your efforts here are some criteria to review in reaching out to organizations:

- Previous working relationship.
- Desire to establish a working relationship.
- Powerful connections in your state or community — large number of members, influence, and access.
- Powerful relationship with important legislators and Members of Congress.
- Media favorite.
- Well known/strong name recognition.

** See chart on page 9 for a list of target national organizations with local and state affiliates

Send letters and copies of Declaration to all on your final list

Send a letter and copy of the Declaration to everyone on your targeted list. It is best to do this by mail, but email is fine if you are working with limited resources. You can and should mail to multiple organizations to maximize your reach.

Follow up with a phone call

Prioritize the most strategic organizations and start with them to confirm that they received it. Call to confirm that they received the letter and ask them if they have any questions. See sample script on page 8. Some organizations require board approval or other formal processes prior to enlistment so it is important to make the calls immediately after you send the letter.

Face-to-face meeting

Face-to-face meetings may only be necessary for high priority target organizations. Calling an organization to secure the sign-on may be all that is necessary.

Sample meeting agenda

- Explain SBHCs locally and at a state level.
- Expected political accomplishments on all levels.
- Declaration utilization.
- Ask about their projects and ways you can support.
- Get firm commitment of sign-on or set a date when you will follow-up for an answer.



Three tactics to advance the issue of school-based health care in your area

Document the support with NASBHC

To help demonstrate our power to Congress, please document all sign-ons. We can only show Congress our collective power by clearly documenting our progress. Once an ally organization signs the declaration, please take a few minutes and complete the online form at www.nasbhc.org/declarationform.pdf.

Three tactics to advance the issue of school-based health care in your area

School-Based Health Care Declaration of Support

Improving Access to Health Care for America's School-Aged Children and Youth through School-Based Health Centers

Connections among school, community, and family are critical elements required for protecting children's health, safety, and well being.

Primary care and behavioral health services are vital components of a comprehensive approach to promoting health and education, and preventing illness among America's children.

Today, school children experience the harmful affects of major public health concerns, including poor nutrition, tobacco use, violence and unintentional injury, substance abuse and chronic diseases such as asthma, obesity, and dental caries.

Millions of children do not have access to appropriate, affordable, and timely preventive health care.

As schools are a logical and time-proven setting in which to provide medical and behavioral health care to those who would otherwise have no access to health care, we the undersigned support school-based health centers as an important strategy for enhancing access to high quality health care for all children.

School-based health centers:

- Improve children's access to health care by overcoming financial and non-financial barriers to care such as lack of health insurance, transportation difficulties, having to miss school, and insufficient attention to the particular needs of adolescents.
- Assure access to care for those students who are the most vulnerable and least likely to obtain care through a traditional health care delivery system.
- Strive to link students to a medical home and communicate regularly with the primary care provider in a way that enhances the coordination of health care delivery.
- Partner with parents in the health education and health supervision of their child, creating connections to the family that reinforce healthy behaviors.
- Integrate their services into the school milieu and support a comprehensive approach to health in the school setting.

We call for the establishment of a national policy that:

- Recognizes the unique characteristics and services delivered in school-based health centers.
- Assures that school-based health care services are adequately compensated for services provided to publicly insured patients.
- Establishes public health resources to support underserved children and adolescents.

Organization Signing On: _____

Organization Contact: _____

Email Address: _____

Organization Address: _____

City and State: _____

Phone Number: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Sample letter to partner organizations

Dear Colleague:

We all recognize the value of our youth and the enhanced value of our world if we invest in their future. To create a brighter future, the health of kids and teens must be a higher priority. School-based health care is key to delivering this brighter, healthier future.

There are over 1,600 school-based health centers across the country and ## in *(state/community)*. School-based health centers provide medical and mental health services in schools or on school grounds. They are generally operated by a community health organization, hospital, or health department. School-based health centers are typically open every school day, and staffed by a team of medical and mental health professionals. Services are decided by each community and often include comprehensive physical exams, sports physicals, immunizations, sick care, chronic disease care, screenings, counseling, and health education.

Educating Members of Congress about the benefits of school-based health centers in their districts is an integral part of NASBHC's strategy to build support for the model and to secure the votes for a federal appropriation.

To this end, we have created the school-based health care declaration — a document that outlines the benefits of school-based health centers. Organizations from the American Public Health Association to the National Association of State Boards of Education have already expressed their support for school-based health care by signing the declaration.

By securing the signatures of more local, state, and national organizations, we can build an even more powerful and visible partnership for change — that lawmakers can't ignore. Just imagine being able to show a Member of Congress a declaration that's signed by some of her/his district's most influential stakeholders. The impact could be pivotal.

We ask you to sign-on to the Declaration today — and help deliver a brighter healthier future for *(insert state)*'s and America's kids and teens.

Sincerely,

Three tactics to advance the issue of school-based health care in your area

Sample phone call script

SBHC: May I please speak with (*name of contact or the executive director*)?

SBHC: My name is _____. I am calling from _____. A couple of days ago I mailed/emailed you a declaration sign-on packet in support of school-based health centers. I am wondering if you received it.

If yes to receiving packet:

Great. First I want to check to see how familiar you are with school-based health centers. How much do you know about them?

If they are familiar or a current partner:

Explanation of Declaration

The declaration is a general letter of support for school-based health care that we are using to build political support at the federal (state and local) level. SBHCs have been developing relationships with Members of Congress to advance a policy to sustain the model in (insert any state or local context here) and across the nation. We'll be using the declaration to demonstrate the wide-spread support that SBHCs have. Our SBHC partners across the country are also gathering support in their states and communities, while our national organization is partnering with other national organizations. Does this sound like something (*organization*) would sign-on to?

If "yes":

Great! Could you complete the sign-on form and send/fax it to me at _____ by the end of the week? I look forward to your support and working together on important projects for both of our organizations.

If unsure:

Is there additional information you need to take the step of support? When is a good date for me to follow-up with you? Thanks for your consideration and please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions. You can reach me at _____.

If "no" to receiving the packet:

Earlier in the week (*your organization*) sent out a packet with information regarding an important initiative we are a part of. Back to Explanation of Declaration. *After explanation part:* What is the best address/email/fax to send you the information?

If unfamiliar with SBHCs:

School-based health centers provide medical and mental health services in schools or on school grounds. They are generally operated by a community health organization, hospital, or health department. School-based health centers are typically open every school day, and staffed by a team of medical and mental health professionals. Services are decided by each community and often include comprehensive physical exams, sports physicals, immunizations, sick care, chronic disease care, screenings, counseling, and health education. There are ## school-based health centers in (state/community)

Three tactics to advance the issue of school-based health care in your area

Target list of potential partners

NASBHC has identified a number of possible strategic partners in advancing school-based health care on the national level. All of the organizations listed below have local affiliates that can sign-on to the Declaration.

National	State	Local
American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)	District and State chapters	Community Pediatrics
American Psychological Association (APA)	State and Provincial Associations	N/A
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)	Statewide teachers union	Local teachers union
American Public Health Association (APHA)	State Associations	N/A
Children’s Defense Fund (CDF)	State Program Offices	N/A
National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC)	State primary care association	Community health centers
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)	State chapters	Local units
National Education Association (NEA)	Statewide teachers union	Local teachers union
Parent Teacher Association (PTA)	Statewide PTA/PTSA	Local school PTA/PTSAs
National Association of School Nurses (NASN)	Statewide nurses association	N/A
National School Board Association (NSBA)	State school board association	Local school boards
Voices for America’s Children	Statewide ‘voices for children’ organization	N/A

Declaration sign-on tracking form

SBHC Advocate:	
Street Address:	
City & State:	
Phone Number:	
Email:	
Organization Signing On:	
Date of Sign On:	
Organization Contact:	
Street Address:	
City & State:	
Phone Number:	
Email:	

Please send to publicaffairs@nasbhc.org or

NASBHC
Attn: Public Affairs Department
666 11th Street, NW Suite 735
Washington, DC 20001

This form can also be entered online at www.nasbhc.org/declarationform.pdf

TACTIC TWO

Letters to the Editor and Opinion Editorials (OpEds)

Introduction

Letters to the Editor and OpEds are effective and inexpensive ways to affect public opinion — and influence lawmakers. They should be an essential part of any awareness campaign you are launching.

Letters to the editor are generally short statements that make one simple point. They are usually a response to something that has appeared in the news or on the opinion page. They are often an attempt to air public responses or attitudes about the news or newspaper's stand. There are several different ideas and approaches letters to the editor can take. Some may comment on a specific charge or allegation in a piece. Others may take issue with a policy or position in a story. Others may point out a gap in the story that the letter helps to fill.

An Op-Ed is an article expressing the opinion of a person on a specific topic. It often appears on the opposite page of a newspaper's editorial. An Op-Ed can be serious or satirical, spark a debate, highlight a neglected point-of-view or offer a new perspective on a current issue. A timely, well-written, and provocative piece can establish the writer as an expert on a particular topic and place an issue in the spotlight of public debate.

Members of Congress, state and local elected officials and community leaders regularly read the editorial pages of the newspaper to track the important issues of the community and notice the leading voices on those topics. Opinion editors also solicit letters/pieces from writers with whom they have established a relationship or people with expertise on topics in the news. Submitting a letter/OpEd can lead to future relationships and opportunities with the newspaper. A good letter/OpEd can play a vital role in shifting a policy maker from “the fence” to the being a supporter of SBHC.

Tips for writing and placing Op-Ed's and Letters to the Editor

Make it short, specific, and localized

- Look for story gaps that you can fill with a point about SBHC. For example, there is a story about your town being voted the healthiest in your state — but there is no mention of your excellent SBHC system and the vital role it played in making your town the healthiest. This is an excellent opportunity for a “great story, but there’s an important gap” letter to the editor.
- Focus on one point in letters to the editor, no more than three in an OpEd.
- Make it a personal story if possible — but also include in your OpEds examples of how systemic change can help an entire group of people in similar situations as the person in the story. For example, the moving story of teenager Joe Smith who received vital treatment from his SBHC for diabetes. The story itself is powerful, but the public focus could be completely on Joe and not on all the Joes across the nation. To make the story have real impact — to help all the Joes — we need to make the point that by investing in SBHC, we can help thousands of teens like Joe. That’s why it’s vital to support federal legislation to fund SBHC, etc.
- Use accurate facts to back up your opinions — and double check to make sure that they are accurate.
- Use simple and straight forward language.
- Avoid jargon, acronyms, and other technical words.
- It’s OK to ask for action from elected officials — they read these letters daily to keep their fingers on the pulse of their constituents.

Know your newspaper

It is important to closely monitor your local paper. Think about the content and — perhaps more importantly — the content gaps. Read the editorial page everyday. You will start to notice a pattern: the typical length of published letters/OpEds, a favored style, who gets published regularly, an on-going topic, etc. By getting to know the “feel” of the page, you have a much better chance of writing a letter/OpEd that is going to get published.

Know your contact

The editorial page editor of your local newspaper is the person you have to contact, engage, and persuade to publish your letter/OpEd. You can find their name by calling the newspaper or checking out their website. On the web or back page of the paper, you can often discover other valuable information about what the editor is looking for: length, delivery method (email vs. snail mail etc.). If you’re not sure, call them and ask.

Three tactics to advance the issue of school-based health care in your area

Who signs the letter/OpEd

From getting to know your newspaper's letter page, determine who should be named as author of the letter/OpEd. It can be a variety of people depending on the goals of your campaign and needs of your organization. But it should be the person who gives your letter/OpEd the best chance for publication. You can ask a local official, community leader, clergy person, organizational head, student, parent, etc.

Submitting a Letter/OpEd

- Write "For Publication" at the top of your letter/OpEd and mail/email it to the editorial page editor.
- Make sure to include your name, address, and daytime phone number — the editor often likes to confirm that the letter/OpEd was written by the person named.

Follow up

Call the editorial page editor the day after your submission to make sure that they received it. Ask them if they have had the opportunity to review the letter: if they haven't, ask them when they think they will have time to do so? If they have, are they thinking about publishing it? If they say "no", politely ask them for feedback. You will want to learn how to do a "better job" the next time. If they say "yes", then you will want to say "thanks." You may want to follow-up again.

Acknowledgements

Be sure to send a "thank you" to the author of your OpEd. Also it is strategic to share the OpEd with targeted elected officials, school administration, and current & potential funders. It is important to tell your key stakeholders about the work you are producing — especially if the director of your organization is not a co-author.

Further Exposure

Letters to the editor: Initiate a letter writing campaign. Get your allies to write letters talking about SBHCs. The more letters and OpEds a paper gets the more likely they are to continue covering the issue. Once you have made it a hot topic and a community issue, candidates will pay attention and have to make public statements regarding SBHCs.

OpEds: If you get an OpEd published, post it on your organizational website. This will not only bring added kudos to your organization, it will give others an opportunity to see what types of periodicals are printing specific stories.

Three tactics to advance the issue of school-based health care in your area

Sample letter to the editor

School-based health centers can step to forefront

April 15, 2006

As Massachusetts plans for a possible bird flu outbreak, encouraging schools to prepare for such a pandemic is forward thinking ("Schools draft plans for avian flu," Page A1, April 10).

However, officials must not forget the role of the state's 49 school-based health centers, which care for thousands of schoolchildren, many of them poor, uninsured, and lacking other primary care.

School-based health centers, sponsored by community health centers, hospitals, and local public health departments, and staffed by skilled nurse practitioners authorized to prescribe medicine, are poised to help cities and towns prepare for a flu crisis and support prevention measures.

The state Department of Public Health licenses the centers, which means there is a built-in line of communication between state and local officials.

Also, part of a nurse practitioner's core role is teaching prevention. During medical appointments and in classrooms, we constantly remind children to cough into their sleeves, wash their hands frequently, and take other important precautions.

Excluding school-based health centers from the community planning process would be squandering a valuable resource.

ERNIA P. HUGHES, Executive Director Massachusetts Coalition of School-Based Health Centers, Boston ■

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Sample OpEd

* The following recent OpEd is an example of infusing an organization's cause into what's "hot" in the news.

Toledo Blade
June 10, 2006
SATURDAY ESSAY

Family planning is good for planet
By JOHN SEAGER

AS SUMMER approaches, global warming has vaulted into the news, thanks to the release of a film called "An Inconvenient Truth," in which former Vice President Al Gore raises the alarm about the impact of carbon emissions on our planet.

Every day we read reports about fuel-efficient cars, wind turbines, and emerging high-tech energy solutions. All seek to cut carbon emissions.

Yet, apart from Mr. Gore's own candid comments, there is near-total silence about the role of global population growth and the need for population stabilization. Serious discussion of population stabilization was absent from international climate meetings in both Kyoto and Montreal and from almost every other public forum. Scientists warn that temperatures will continue to rise unless we stabilize greenhouse gas levels.

Global warming will be accompanied by increased average sea levels of four to 35 inches, flooding homes and destroying fragile wetlands. To stop this, it is estimated that global Co2 emissions must be cut by 2100 by at least 40 percent.

Yet the United Nations projects that world population will rise by 40 percent to 9.1 billion by 2050. Even if we change our ways, the environmental footprint of each human being will never reach zero. As population increases, the challenge becomes ever more difficult.

After all, it is people, not birds or bears, who drive the Hummers and the hybrids, who heat and cool homes and offices. Although the vast majority of population growth occurs in the least-developed nations, they, too, are using more fossil fuels every day as they seek better lives.

What can we do? The truth is that we know that family planning works everywhere. When women and couples are free to make their own informed choices and have access to education and family planning, they choose to have smaller families.

Three tactics to advance the issue of school-based health care in your area

Thirty years ago, for example, Mexican women had almost seven children each. Today, thanks to education and the availability of family planning, they have an average of 2.6 children.

Globally, there are at least 350 million couples that lack family planning services. Here in the United States, one-third of all births are unplanned. And the Bush Administration's family planning failures, from its Global Gag Rule to ideologically driven abstinence-only programs that mock serious sex education, contribute directly to millions of unwanted and unplanned births.

If we could cut by half the number of unwanted births in the United States, we'd have about 5 million fewer births over 20 years. Family planning makes sense for people - and for our fragile planet.

More people will use more energy. The sooner we stabilize population growth, the more likely we are to meet the climate change challenge.

It's good to focus on thorny, highly technical issues such as tax credits, energy alternatives, and emissions trading programs. It's especially important here in the United States, where less than 5 percent of the world's population produces about one-quarter of the world's carbon dioxide emissions.

But cutting energy consumption must be coupled with stabilizing population. If we had zero population growth, part of the global warming problem would, well, melt away. Global warming is too important to be left to politicians or energy experts. It's about people - all of us. It's about how many of us there are and how we choose to live our modern lives. It's about the very personal decisions we make about when, whether, and how many children we choose to have.

That particular truth can be convenient as long as we're willing to support the notion that every woman and every couple should have the resources and the power to control their own reproductive lives.

John Seager is president of Population Connection (formerly Zero Population Growth) in Washington, D.C.

Three tactics to advance the issue of school-based health care in your area

Sample phone call script

Following up with the editorial editor on letters and OpEds

Hi, my name is *(insert your name)*, may I speak with the letters editor *(their name if you know it)* please?

When you get connected

Hi, my name is *(your name)*. I was wondering if you have had the opportunity to review a letter/OpEd I sent/mailed yesterday?

If they haven't

(Say their name again) In response to the article/OpEd *(on xx date)*, I submitted a letter/OpEd to the editor highlighting the role of school-based health care. I know you are very busy, but when do you think you might have time to look it over?

If they have

Are you thinking about publishing it? When do you think it will be published?

If they say "no"

I know you are busy, but I wonder could you give me some feedback? I would like to learn how to do a "better job" the next time. *(If they sound really busy, offer to call back. This is another opportunity to establish a relationship or, at the very least, name recognition.)*

If they say "maybe"

When will you know? Can I get you any more information? *(Stress the relevance and urgency of your letter/OpEd. Again offer to call back at a better time.)*

If they say "yes"

Thanks very much! When will it be in the paper? *(Call after it runs for another "thank you" and to further the relationship.)*

Three tactics to advance the issue of school-based health care in your area

Editorial tracking form

Name:	
Address:	
City & State:	
Phone Number:	
SBHC:	
Congressional District:	
Media Outlets Sent To:	
Media Outlets Published:	
Date of Publication:	
Author(s) of the letters or editorials:	
Contact at Media Outlet:	

Please send to a copy of the letter/OpEd to publicaffairs@nasbhc.org or

NASBHC
Attn: Public Affairs Department
666 11th Street, NW Suite 735
Washington, DC 20001

This form can also be entered online at www.nasbhc.org/editorform.pdf

TACTIC THREE

Candidate Forums

Introduction

Elections are a great time to get the word about school-based health centers into the public dialogue. There will be a number of opportunities to participate in candidate forums during the summer and fall of 2006 as races for Congressional seats and state and local offices heat up. Getting involved in a candidate forum can advance the goals of SBHC policy on the federal, state, and local levels with a number of audiences:

Partner organizations

Candidate forums are often organized by a number of sponsoring organizations. Becoming part of one in your community can bridge new or deepen existing relationships with partner organizations. Eventually this could place SBHCs on the agenda of powerful new partners.

Candidates for elected office

One of the candidates at the forum will become the next elected official who will have the power to make decisions on the advancement of SBHCs. Your presence at the event will place SBHCs in the dialogue of the candidates' issues. Ultimately you can get the candidates to 'go on record' with their support of SBHCs. Once they are in office, this support can be leveraged for positive policy change.

Community members and media

Candidate forums are attended by members of the partner organizations — people just like you — and members of the press. When SBHCs are part of the dialogue and potentially covered in the press, the broader community can become aware of, and ultimately supportive of, SBHCs.

SBHC supporters

Candidate forums have large numbers of people and positive energy. They can be an inspirational venue to gather SBHC consumers, teachers, and supporters to come together and speak out. Organizing a strong presence of people from your SBHC at the candidate forum provides opportunities to build leadership and investment in the policy work for future activities and projects.

Tips on participating in candidate forums

Identify a forum

Research other groups that are sponsoring candidate forums. First, contact leading health and education groups. Otherwise, pick a forum that is sponsored by a broad-based community organization or sponsored by a potentially allied organization. You can also find out when forums are taking place by contacting the candidates' offices.

Co-sponsor the forum

Consider co-sponsoring the forum with other groups. As a co-sponsor you may have more influence in the format and questions to be asked. This will also promote your organization or SBHCs and position and/or strengthen your group as a community leader. Depending on the forum structure, co-sponsoring could require a simple placement of your name on the promotional materials, turning-out attendees or assisting with logistics. This varies from organization to organization. Once you learn the "rules", decide if you have the capacity to co-sponsor. Co-sponsoring is a great way to build new relationships and deepen existing ones.

Find out the format

Find out if there is an opportunity for questions from the audience or if the questions are pre-determined by the sponsoring group. If questions from the audience are allowed, find out how long the Q&A period will last. This may determine how many questions you can expect to ask.

If the sponsor is determining the questions in advance, ask if they will include a question about school-based health care. Provide them with reasons why including them are important and the wording for the question.

It is important to find out how the moderators are controlling the response of the candidates. Will all candidates be expected to answer every question? Will you be able to ask an individual candidate specific questions? How much time will they have to respond? It is important to know this when preparing your constituents to ask questions.

Build relationships with the candidates

Get familiar with your Member of Congress and the other candidates. You can find candidate information on their websites and for Members of Congress on www.congressmerge.com. You can request bio and background information on candidates at their campaign headquarters.

Three tactics to advance the issue of school-based health care in your area

Make sure that the candidates are familiar with SBHCs before the forum. In advance of the forum, send candidates information about SBHCs, along with your contact information. The candidates' familiarity will give SBHCs more credibility and they will appreciate your outreach in helping with their preparation. You may want to let the candidates and/or their campaign managers know you will be raising questions about SBHCs at the meeting. Don't provide the exact questions. However, if you call one candidate, you must call all of them. You cannot show candidate preference.

Be sure to continue the relationship with the candidates after the event. If you are able to talk to them or their staff immediately after the forum, give them brochures and fact sheets from your SBHC. For sitting Members of Congress, make sure to add NASBHC materials, as their focus will often be both local and national. If you are not able to get materials in their hands, send them to their campaign office the following day.

Recruit your constituents

Determine how many people you want to attend the forum. This is a great opportunity for consumers, school faculty, and other supporters to get involved in supporting SBHCs in public dialogue. It also may be appropriate for just a few people from your SBHC community to attend.

If you decide to recruit a number of people, develop a plan to maximize their presence at the forum. Follow-up with reminders. Try and provide childcare and other support if possible.

This is also a great opportunity for students. Contact teachers of public affairs and find out if students could get extra credit for attending. Having students provide testimonials is also very effective.

Show up at the forum

Wear buttons or stickers identifying all of you as an organized group. If possible, travel together to the forum as a group. There is often "mingle time" with the candidates. Plan to arrive early or to stay later if the opportunity to meet candidates arises. Your members, or pairs of members, can "adopt" a candidate and seek them out individually to have the question answered. Candidates and other organizations will be impressed by your organization and focus.

Ask the tough questions

Plan in advance what questions you want to have answered. If the format has pre-determined questions, this will be done in advance of the forum.

Three tactics to advance the issue of school-based health care in your area

In the event of an open question and answer period, prioritize questions and get everyone on the same page about asking the one or two top questions. If you plan to ask multiple questions, it is a good idea for your group to spread out around the room. This will increase your chances of having multiple questions asked.

Remain confident, considerate, and persistent about getting an answer to your questions. Stay on message. Don't get distracted or angry if you don't get a detailed answer. Be assertive in repeating the question and asking for an appropriate response. Have someone take notes on what the candidates say for future accountability sessions.

Building your team and leadership

Keep track of names and contact information for everyone who participated from your group so you can include them in future efforts. Have a scheduled time to talk with your participants about what they learned about the candidates and the political process. Reinforce the ways your group expects to advance its goals through participation in the electoral process. Use the momentum and interest generated by the forum as an opportunity to sign people up for the next activity. This can be the easiest step to skip in the process and yet is the most important in continuing to build your leadership and power. Follow up with the candidates.

Maximize the Media

Reporters often attend candidate forums. Identify a member or members of your team to locate the media at the forum and provide them with information on SBHCs. Find out their names and contact information; follow-up with them the day after to see if they need any additional information. Even if you don't get coverage of SBHCs from the forum, you are establishing important relationships that will be helpful for future stories and activities.

Three tactics to advance the issue of school-based health care in your area

Sample timeline for successful turnout to the candidate forums

6 weeks before the forum

- Send letters to the candidates.
- Contact the sponsoring organization(s).

5 weeks before the forum

- Determine your goals for turnout.
- Create a list of people to recruit.
- Identify leaders to help with recruitment.

4 weeks before the forum

- Send email notices.
- Post fliers in the SBHC.
- Determine the questions you want to ask.
- Call candidates offices to confirm they got the letter and inform them that you will be at the forum.
- Decide materials to create and/or bring to forum.

3 weeks before the forum

- Finalize logistics plan for getting volunteers to the forum.
- Finalize floor plan for forum.
- Recruitment phone calls to potential attendees.
- Determine who will ask the questions (if appropriate to forum structure).

2 weeks before the forum

- Recruitment phone calls to potential attendees.
- Prepare materials to bring to forum.

1 week before the forum

- Confirm all logistics needs (cars, buttons, signs, etc).
- Rehearse with people asking questions (if appropriate to forum structure).
- Reminder email to all committed attendees.

Day before the forum

- Reminder phone calls to all committed attendees.

Three tactics to advance the issue of school-based health care in your area

Sample letter to campaigns

Dear (candidate name)

(Name of your organization) is looking forward to hearing your views regarding child and adolescent health at the upcoming candidate forum on (date or forum). As you are probably aware, access to quality health care is one of the critical issues facing our children and adolescents in (name of city or state).

School-based health centers (SBHCs) are one of the primary means of providing this needed access. Nationwide, there are approximately 1,700 SBHCs serving nearly 2 million children in 46 states. Currently, (name of city or state) has (#) SBHCs. They are a critical component of the health care safety net for children and adolescents.

SBHCs serve our communities by providing comprehensive pediatric health care in a school. These centers are designed to meet the physical and behavioral health care needs of children and adolescents in the community, and sometimes their dental needs as well. The clinical services are provided by a multi-disciplinary team which can include pediatricians, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, physician assistants, psychiatrists, counselors, and other health professionals who administer medical care with the consent of a parent or guardian. This medical care ranges from immunizations, physicals, and well-child exams to acute care, chronic disease management, and vision and hearing screenings. In addition to clinical services, SBHCs also offer health and nutrition education. SBHCs are usually sponsored by a qualified health provider such as a local health department, hospital or community health provider.

Attached is a fact sheet with information about our SBHCs. I hope this is helpful to you in understanding the significant role SBHCs play in our community and why we must continue to support and strengthen this model of care in order to work towards ensuring quality health care for all children and adolescents in (city or state).

Once again, we look forward to hearing your priorities regarding increasing access to health and mental health services for children and adolescents and what you will do to support our school-based health centers. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact (contact name, # and email).

Sincerely,

Sample questions and tips for drafting questions

Sample SBHC Question

Knowing that school-based health centers provide critical access to quality care, a safety net, and savings in public resources, I would like to know from each of you (1) what you will do to support these centers and (2) what actions will you take to guarantee the expansion of these centers to all communities?

Tips for drafting additional questions:

(1) *Draft a number of questions*

Develop a variety of questions that approach your core question from different angles, in case your first question is asked by someone else.

(2) *Keep questions brief and to the point*

Make sure questions are short, concise, and actually ask for something very specific. Avoid speeches “dressed up” as questions. In crafting your questions, you may want to acknowledge a party’s, or a candidate’s, previous work in support of SBHC issues. Be careful not to appear politically partisan.

(3) *Personalize your questions*

Questioners should identify the districts where they live, but remain neutral on candidates. Questions should refer to a local issue or personal anecdote.

(4) *Use local, state, and national data*

All politics is local — so while it helps to talk about, say, how many American kids and teens are uninsured, the national statistic is made more powerful if it is localized. For example, to a Chicago audience: There are over 8 million uninsured kids and teens in America today – that’s the equivalent of three Chicago’s or 202 Wrigley Fields.

(5) *Anticipate the “waffle” response*

A candidate may respond to your question with a “filler” answer such as “of course health care for all children is important”, or “we spend a great deal of money on uninsured children” Don’t get sidetracked! If you get the opportunity, respond by reiterating the real question and asking for a real answer.

Three tactics to advance the issue of school-based health care in your area

Candidate forum tracking form

Name:	
Street Address:	
City & State:	
Phone Number:	
SBHC:	
Congressional District:	
Date of Forum:	
Elected Officials Present:	
Sponsoring Orgs:	
Event Attendance:	
Number of SBHC Attendees:	
Questions Asked: Q:	
A:	
Q:	
A:	
Follow Up Done:	
Future Follow Up:	
Did you send any information to the candidates prior to the event?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, what did you send?	
Is there a story or highlight that you would like to share?	

Send to: publicaffairs@nasbhc.org or: NASBHC Attn. Public Affairs Department
 666 11th Street, NW Suite 735
 Washington, DC 20001

This form can also be entered online at www.nasbhc.org/forumform.pdf