SC Department of Mental Health School Based Behavioral Health Services are provided at school to support the needs of families, children, and schools. A major focus is to provide services that are consistent with the schools educational goals for students. Research provides information that supports the school based services as a means of efficiency, is less stigmatizing, and includes a team approach which encourages families, children, adolescents and school staff to be active participants. Providing services directly to students in the schools is a logical and effective strategy to address mental health needs of children and adolescents.

School based services are a comprehensive, integrated, and evidenced based, and strength based program that serve the mental health needs of school-aged children in a non-stigmatized school setting. The program seeks to identify and intervene at early points in the emotional disturbance and assist parents, teachers and school counselors with the application of evidenced based interventions for resolving these disturbances.

Service delivery efforts in a comprehensive program will focus on prevention and early intervention for youth at risk in social, emotional, behavioral, poor health and/or academic difficulties. Intervention with youth and families experiencing difficult transitions and developmental milestone changes is best reduced when reached early. Interventions with youth and their families, individual and family therapy/ counseling offered through school-based programs are likely to be provided with more frequency and intensity and thus result in quicker resolutions.

School based mental health has embraced the focus of school behavioral health. The plan is to provide a broad wellness behavioral health program that will address students behaviors, and students overall health in relationship to academic success. This approach address barriers to learning through a comprehensive approach to education, health, and mental wellness.

School based programs include coordination with the school nurse, classroom observations, collaborations with teachers, home visits, mental health education, and a behavioral health approach with prevention and intervention. Children and adolescents have better outcomes such as improved grades, attendance, and better performance on state assessments, reduce suspensions, and expulsions with fewer discipline referrals with a behavioral health approach.