

Integrating social determinants of health into school-based healthcare

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Our academic affiliations



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Outcomes

- 
 Define social determinants of health (SDOH) and related concepts, including the importance, impact, and evolution of key terminology related to SDOH
- 
 Describe ways to successfully include SDOH into your clinical setting
- 
 Share ideas for working with students to turn SDOH research into real-world impact in "kid-friendly ways"

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School Nursing Practice Framework™

Supporting Students to be Healthy, Safe and Ready to Learn



Alignment with Framework

- Leadership:** Engaging in and influencing decision-making that influences SDOH within both educational and health systems.
- Care coordination:** Connecting students and families with resources relevant to SDOH
- Community and public health:** Culturally inclusive care when addressing SDOH, population health implications of SDOH
- Quality improvement:** Use of SDOH data and research to enhance clinical practice
- Standards of practice:** Incorporating clinical judgment, critical thinking, and evidence to address SDOH

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What are SDOH?

- The conditions in which children and families are born, live, and grow
 - Neighborhood factors like park access
 - Social factors like language spoken in home community
 - Educational factors like parent education levels
 - Health factors like access to mental healthcare
 - Economic factors like household income
- Take a guess: What percent of health outcomes are due to social, environmental, and economic factors?

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Related concepts

Health equity – SDOH helps us understand why health inequities exist

Population health – SDOH helps us understand the factors that influence health of whole populations

Public health – SDOH impact whole groups of people (in addition to individual patients), consistent with a public health approach

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Evolution of terminology

Recently, there has been a lot of public conversation about word choice.

Our focus today is not about semantics of particular words, but about **real world actions** nurses can take to help all students attain best health and learning outcomes.

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Structural Barriers

- Nurses work within existing systems and structures that both cause SDOH and influence our ability to address SDOH
- Today, we will talk about concrete ways to have a real impact that are within nurses' power
- A focus on feasible actions can help prevent feeling overwhelmed or burnt out by trying to address complex SDOH
- Our talk is focused on clinical care in the medical room
- Note: Big picture efforts to change structures, like engaging in advocacy and policy, are outside the scope of this talk but are very important too!

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As school
nurses,
we...

Empower your students to take ownership of their health, including the SDOH-related factors that influence it

Consider what health means to students and how they can reach their health goals

Help students reflect on the health effects of their home and school environments, and adjust their healthy habits based on those contexts

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Integrating into clinical practice

Systematic
screening and
documentation

Resource
connections

Culturally
responsive
care

Advocacy and
collaboration

Targeted
interventions

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Strategy (1) Identification of needs



- **Aim:** make SDOH assessment routine
 - Add short, age-appropriate SDOH screening questions to your current workflow
 - Focus screening questions on the most relevant SDOH concerns for students and families
 - Use trauma-informed and culturally sensitive communication to reduce stigma and help students feel comfortable sharing
- **Clinical tip:** To track SDOH indicators over time, embed screening results into electronic health records (EHRs) or school health documentation

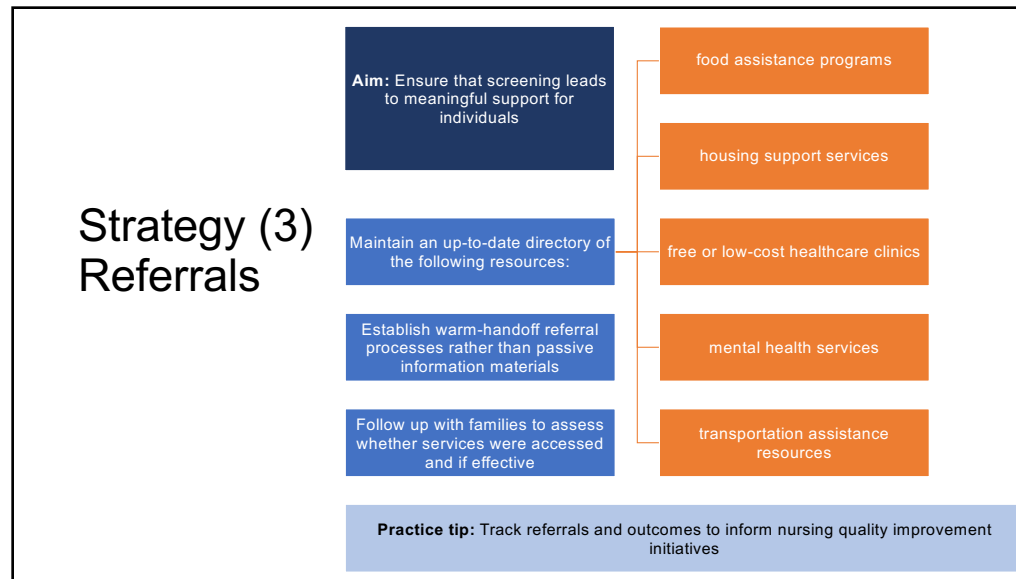
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Strategy (2) Data

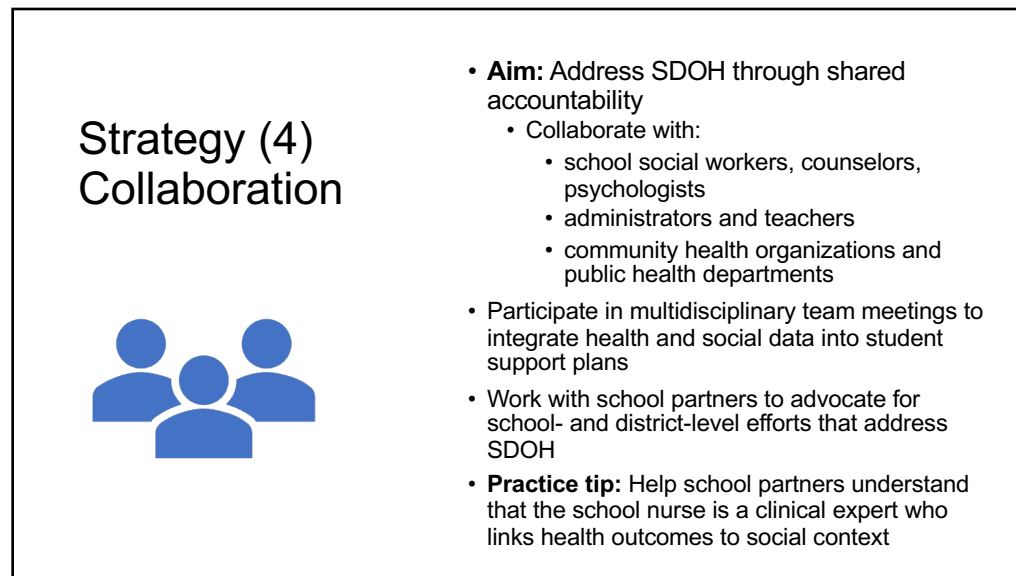


- **Aim:** Use SDOH data to inform individualized and population-level care
 - Stratify students by risks linked to social factors, such as frequent visits, unmanaged chronic illness, absenteeism
 - Tailor care plans to account for identified barriers.
 - For example, modify an asthma action plan to account for housing conditions or medication access
 - Aggregate SDOH data to identify trends the impact classrooms, grades, or the entire school
- **Clinical tip:** Align findings with attendance data, IEP/504 plans, and behavioral referrals to provide a full clinical picture

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Strategy (5) Engagement

- **Aim:** Empower families and students rather than pathologize experiences
 - Educate families on how social conditions affect health and learning
 - Use strengths-based language that recognizes family resilience
 - Adapt communication methods (language access, literacy level, preferred formats)
- **Practice tip:** Offer flexible contact options (phone, text, virtual meetings) to minimize access barriers



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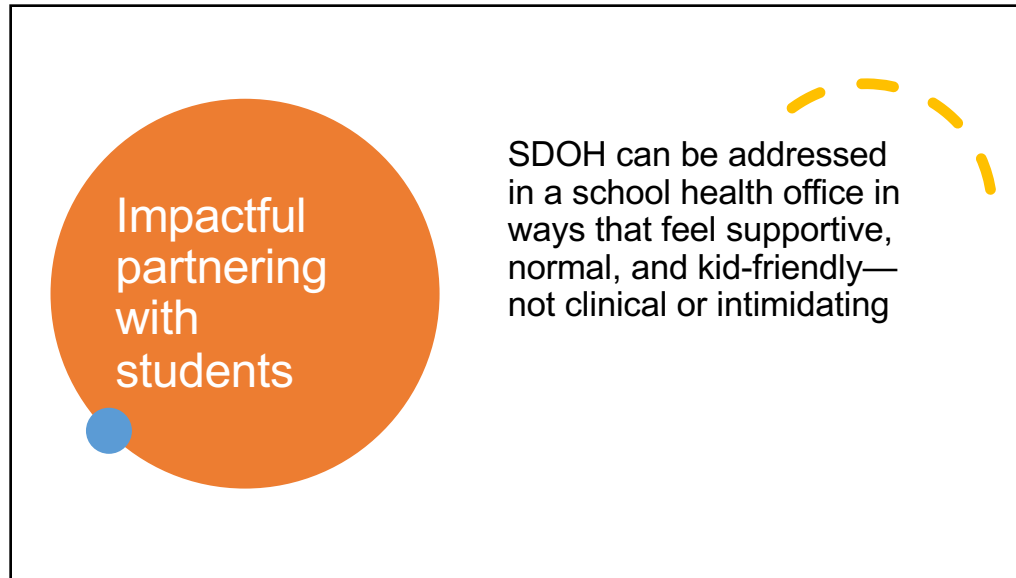


THINK – PAIR – SHARE

What is **one way** you have integrated SDOH in your practice?

If you haven't yet, what is **one idea** you have for doing so?

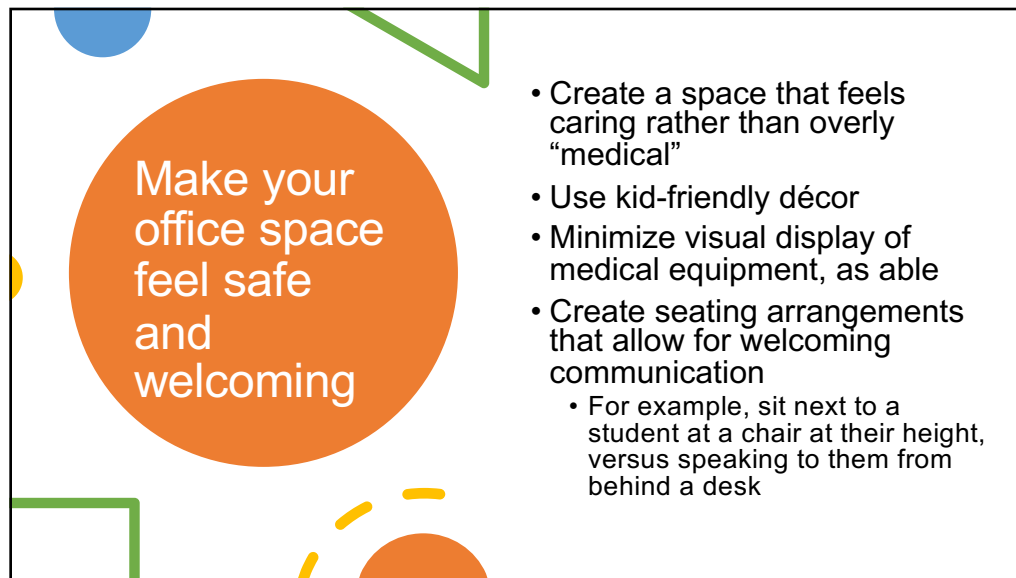
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Impactful partnering with students

SDOH can be addressed in a school health office in ways that feel supportive, normal, and kid-friendly—not clinical or intimidating

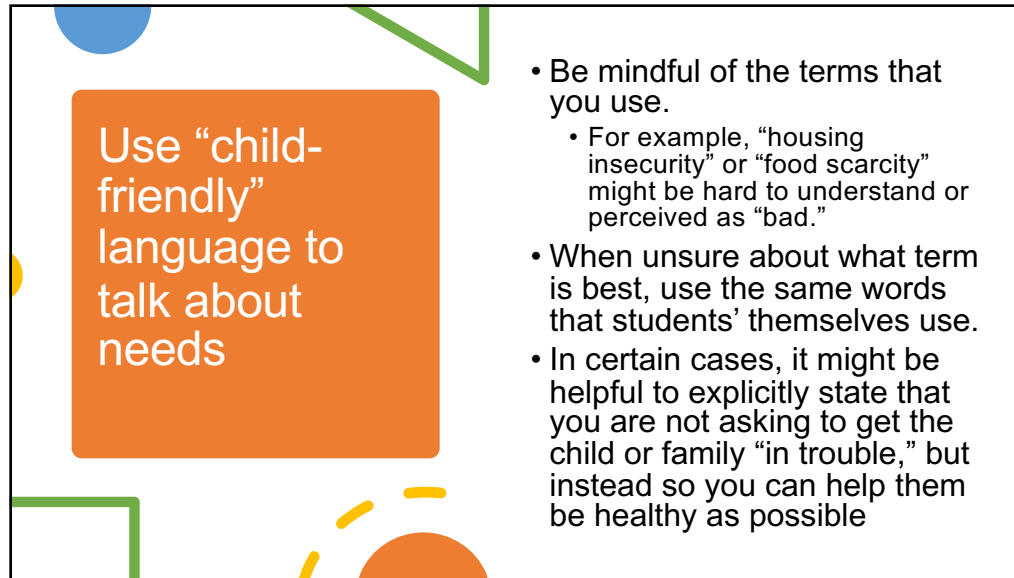
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Make your office space feel safe and welcoming

- Create a space that feels caring rather than overly “medical”
- Use kid-friendly décor
- Minimize visual display of medical equipment, as able
- Create seating arrangements that allow for welcoming communication
 - For example, sit next to a student at a chair at their height, versus speaking to them from behind a desk

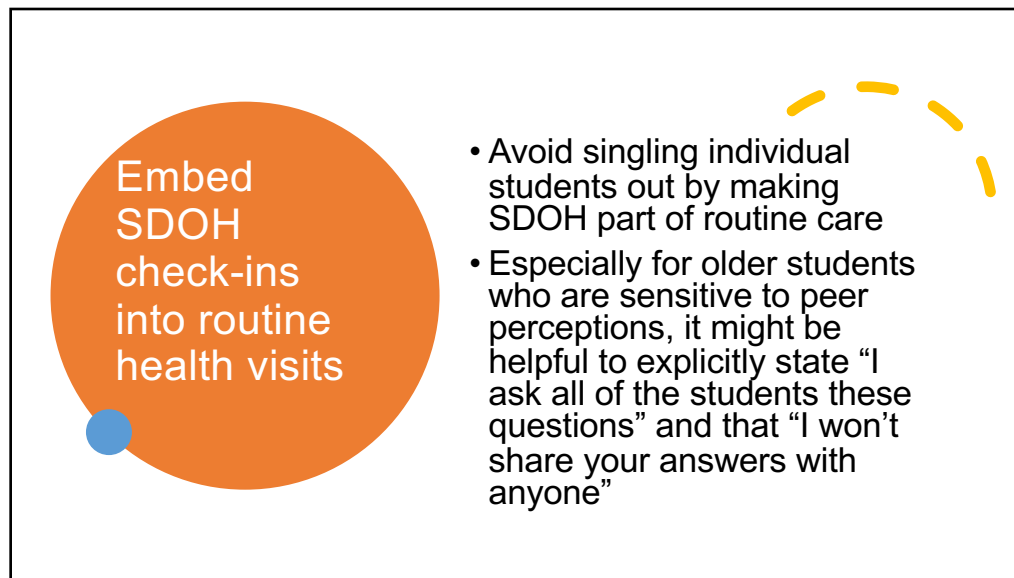
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Use “child-friendly” language to talk about needs

- Be mindful of the terms that you use.
 - For example, “housing insecurity” or “food scarcity” might be hard to understand or perceived as “bad.”
- When unsure about what term is best, use the same words that students’ themselves use.
- In certain cases, it might be helpful to explicitly state that you are not asking to get the child or family “in trouble,” but instead so you can help them be healthy as possible

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Embed SDOH check-ins into routine health visits

- Avoid singling individual students out by making SDOH part of routine care
- Especially for older students who are sensitive to peer perceptions, it might be helpful to explicitly state “I ask all of the students these questions” and that “I won’t share your answers with anyone”

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Offer diverse ways for kids to share their needs

- Some students may not want to talk but will write, draw, or paint
- Others may like to walk and talk.
 - For example, you can go on an errand together at school.



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- Make resources visible without being stigmatizing
- If accurate, share with students that others are using resources.
 - For example, “other kids in your grade have tried this program too, and they told me it helped them feel better”
- Let students know it is okay to seek assistance.
 - For example, “we all need help sometimes”

Normalize
access to
basic needs

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Addressing the implications upfront

- School nurses play a crucial role in identifying SDOH-related concerns and their effects on student health.
- By recognizing your position, you have the opportunity to partner with students and families to address SDOH



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Questions

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