

Children with Special Health Care Needs in Public Schools

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Context: The Medical Home

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Population of Interest

- ▶ Children with special health care needs (CSHCN) are:
 - ▶ those who have or are at increased risk for a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition; and
 - ▶ also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally.



What is a Medical Home?

- ▶ A “Medical Home” is not a place. It is a *relationship* that families build with the health, mental health, educational, and other providers who take care of their children all of the time, on a regular basis.
- ▶ Who should be a part of a child’s medical home?
 - ▶ Health providers (i.e., pediatrician and specialists)
 - ▶ Mental health providers (i.e., therapist, psychologist, or psychiatrist)
 - ▶ When appropriate, school staff members (i.e., school nurse, counselor, social worker, psychologist, or teacher)



Education Professionals and the Medical Home

- ▶ Medical home literature focuses on the role of medical professionals and does not adequately address education professionals' participation.
- ▶ There is a significant gap in the knowledge base about how education professionals can best be incorporated into the medical home for CSHCN and what impact this involvement may have on the student's success in school.



Family Perspective

- ▶ Information is lacking to assist parents to:
 - ▶ Assess the capacity of their child's public school to meet his/her special health and/or mental health care needs;
 - ▶ Access and coordinate various health and mental health services from community, private, and public sources;
 - ▶ Understand how best to engage public school staff in their child's medical home to improve his/her care and success in school.





Our Study

Dr. Chandra Keller-Allen
The George Washington University

Impetus for the Study: The HSC Foundation

- ▶ The study was funded by The HSC Foundation with support from the Graduate School of Education & Human Development at The George Washington University
- ▶ The HSC Foundation is:
 - ▶ a DC based private, non-profit organization associated with a pediatric center and a health care plan for CSHCN;
 - ▶ dedicated to improving access to services for individuals with special needs who face challenging social and health care barriers;
 - ▶ currently focused on the areas of youth transitions and employment readiness strategies; family supports, training, and advocacy; and childhood obesity awareness, education, and prevention.

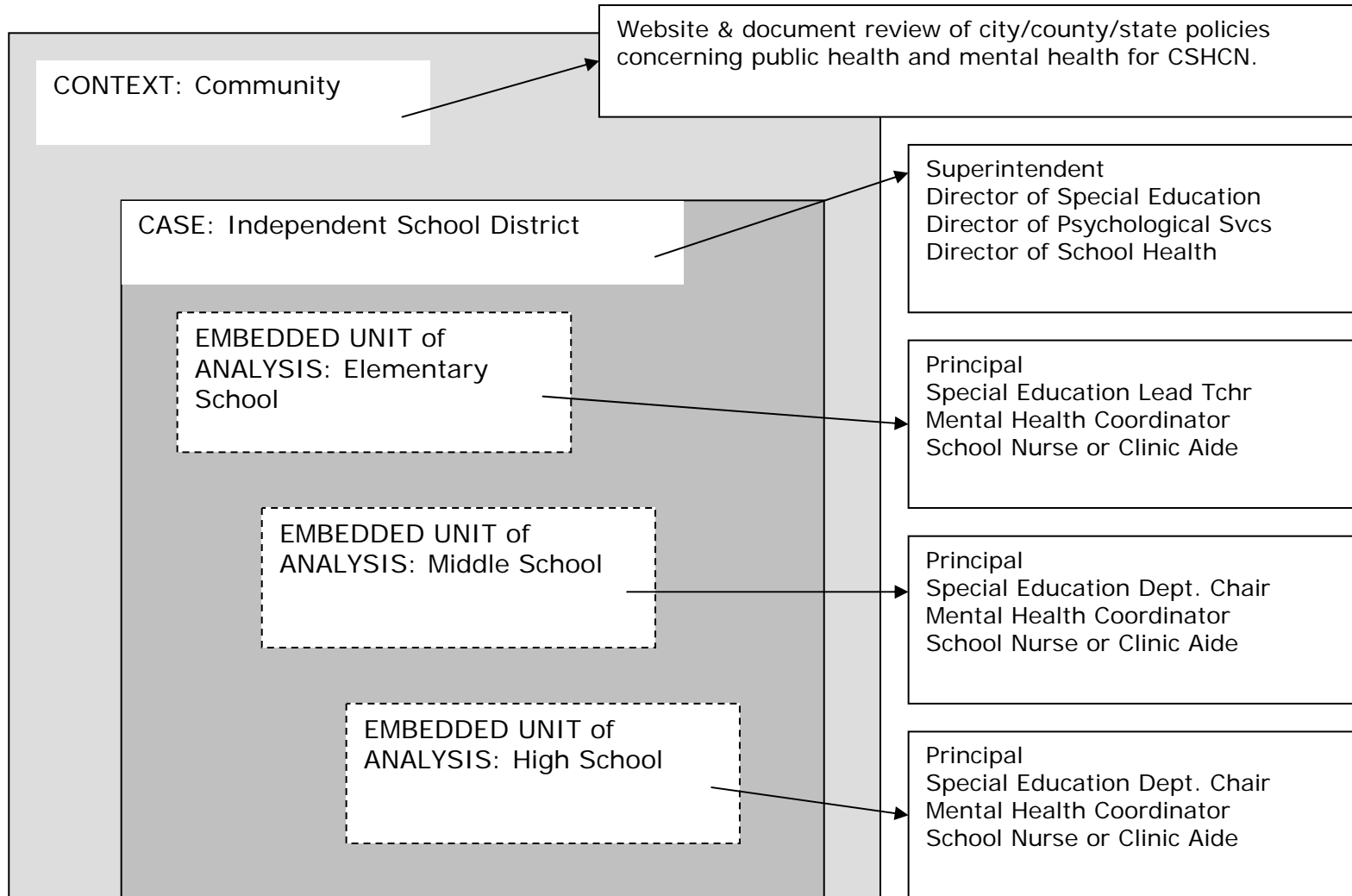


Research Questions

1. How are selected school systems meeting the health and mental health needs of CSHCN?
2. To what extent, with whom, and how are the school systems interacting with health and mental health professionals to meet the needs of CSHCN?
3. What challenges do schools face in meeting the needs of CSHCN?



Study Design: Multiple Case Study



Findings: Service Delivery Dilemmas

- ▶ District choices for staffing health and mental health personnel impacts availability and quality of services for CSHCN
 - ▶ RNs in every school versus public health nurse for cluster of schools
 - ▶ Availability and student: practitioner ratio of school psychologists and social workers
 - ▶ Duties and responsibilities of school nurses, psychologists, and social workers
 - ▶ Use of individualized health and/or behavior plans



Findings: Involvement in Medical Home

- ▶ Direct school communication with student's medical and/or mental health providers was seen as beneficial and enabled the school-based team to be better informed, more efficient, and coordinated in their efforts to serve particular students
- ▶ However, barriers existed:
 - ▶ Many students did not have a consistent medical home
 - ▶ Lack of time on the part of school personnel
 - ▶ Difficulty in getting in contact with medical and/or mental health professionals
 - ▶ Lack of parental consent



Findings: Impact of State Policy

- ▶ General finding that there was a great deal of unmet needs among CSHCN, particularly in the area of mental health services
- ▶ Various state and local policy structures for providing a wide range of community services to disadvantaged children had an impact on the extent to which school personnel could assist parents in accessing needed services



Implications & Opportunities for the CSHCN Population

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