



## Overview of SHARS

The School Health and Related Services (SHARS) program allows Texas public schools to receive federal Medicaid reimbursement for providing specific health-related services to students in special education. This program helps schools cover the costs of services that students with disabilities need to access and benefit from their education.

## Why Do We Have SHARS?

The School Health and Related Services (SHARS) program exists to help public schools offset the costs of providing necessary health-related services to students with disabilities who are eligible for special education. By participating in SHARS, schools can receive federal Medicaid reimbursement for delivering these services, allowing them to reinvest those funds into their special education programs and support the educational needs of students with disabilities. The primary goals of SHARS are:

1. **Supporting Access to Education:** SHARS ensures that students with disabilities receive the medical and related services they need to participate fully in their education. This aligns with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which mandates that students with disabilities have access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE).
2. **Financial Relief for Schools:** By providing federal reimbursement for eligible services, SHARS reduces the financial burden on school districts, enabling them to allocate resources more effectively across their educational programs.
3. **Encouraging Inclusive Practices:** SHARS supports schools in maintaining inclusive environments where students with disabilities can receive the necessary services without having to leave the school setting.

## Who Qualifies?

To be eligible for SHARS, a student must:

- Be enrolled in a public-school special education program.
- Be under 20 years old.
- Have an Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD)/Individualized Education Program (IEP) that documents the medical necessity of the services.
- Have a disability or chronic medical condition.
- Be eligible for Medicaid.

## What Services Are Covered?

SHARS covers a range of health-related services that are listed in the student's IEP, including:

- Assessments
- Audiology (hearing services)
- Counseling
- Nursing
- Medical Services
- Occupational Therapy
- Personal Care Services
- Physical Therapy
- Psychological Services
- Special Transportation
- Speech Therapy

## Requirements to Participate

To participate in SHARS, school districts must:

1. **Provider Enrollment:** Enroll as a Medicaid provider with Texas Medicaid and Healthcare Partnership (TMHP). This includes meeting all state and federal Medicaid provider requirements, including licensure and certification.
2. **Documentation:** Maintain accurate and detailed records for services provided. This includes:
  - ARD/IEP documents showing the medical necessity of services.
  - Attendance records.
  - Provider qualifications (licenses and certifications).
  - Prescriptions or referrals required for certain services.
  - Detailed session notes, service logs, and supervision logs.
3. **Parental Consent:** Obtain parental consent before billing Medicaid for SHARS services, as required by federal regulations.
4. **Random Moment Time Study (RMTS):** Participate in the RMTS to determine the percentage of time spent on Medicaid-related activities. Schools must maintain a Participant List (PL) of staff regularly providing SHARS services.
5. **Interim Billing:** Submit claims to Medicaid on an interim basis throughout the year to receive reimbursement for services as they are provided. This requires submitting claims that accurately reflect the services delivered according to Medicaid guidelines.
6. **Cost Reporting:** Submit an annual cost report to document the actual costs of providing SHARS services, which determines the reimbursement rate.
7. **Training and Compliance:** Ensure that staff members involved in SHARS are trained on program requirements, documentation, and compliance with Medicaid rules and regulations.

### **Documentation Requirements**

Schools need to keep records related to SHARS services for at least seven years, as these are both educational and Medicaid records. Essential documents include:

- ARD/IEP documents showing medical necessity.
- Attendance records.
- Assessment and evaluation reports.
- Provider qualifications (licenses, certifications).
- Contracts with service providers.
- Prescriptions or referrals for services.
- Logs for supervision, sessions, and transportation.
- Payment histories and claims documentation.
- Parental consent forms required by federal law.

### **The Impact of SHARS on School Districts**

SHARS provides critical financial support to Texas public school districts by allowing them to receive federal Medicaid reimbursement for health-related services provided to students with disabilities who are eligible for special education. This funding helps districts cover the costs of services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, counseling, nursing, and

transportation, which are essential for students to access and benefit from their education. By participating in SHARS, districts can reinvest the reimbursement funds into their special education programs, reduce financial strain, and enhance their capacity to deliver comprehensive, inclusive services that support the educational success of students with disabilities.

### **Free Care Option Available**

The "free care" rule allows school districts to receive Medicaid reimbursement for health-related services provided to all students, not just those in special education, as long as the services meet Medicaid requirements. This rule, which was clarified by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in 2014, aims to remove financial barriers and encourage schools to provide essential health services, such as immunizations, vision and hearing screenings, and behavioral health services, to all students who qualify for Medicaid. By leveraging Medicaid funding under the free care rule, districts can expand their health services, promote better overall student health, and ensure that medical needs are met without placing the financial burden solely on the schools or families, ultimately supporting a healthier learning environment. As of now, around 20 states have received approval from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to implement the free care rule, allowing them to bill Medicaid for health-related services provided to all students, not just those in special education. States that have been approved include California, Colorado, Georgia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Ohio, among others.