

Healthy Children. Better Students. Thriving Communities.

HEALTHY LEARNERS SCHOOL NURSE HANDBOOK 2026-2027



HEALTHY LEARNERS

A Ministry of the Sisters of Charity Health System

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Healthy Learners
A Ministry of the Sisters of Charity Health System

Mission Statement

In the spirit of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine,
Healthy Learners is devoted to removing children's health barriers to learning with love and
compassion.

Vision Statement

Our vision is that all children are healthy and able to reach
their full potential.

Program Overview

Healthy Learners provides access to healthcare for children in need who lack resources. Our target population includes the children who would otherwise fall through the “cracks” of the healthcare system.

This includes:

1. Children who do not have Medicaid or other private health coverage.
2. Children with Medicaid who need replacement eyeglasses and/or assistance with transportation and/or care coordination.

You may use the free/reduced lunch guidelines to help determine eligibility, but these are meant only to serve as a guide, as your knowledge of the family and their circumstances matters most. A checklist for determining eligibility for Healthy Learners can be found in the back of the handbook and on our website. Please call your local Healthy Learners program and ask if you are unsure if a family qualifies. Service may be determined on a “case-by-case” basis. First and foremost, we want the child’s needs to be served.

Additionally, resource information about Medicaid and its managed care plans (Healthy Connections) can be found at the back of the handbook. Healthy Learners can also assist eligible families in the Medicaid application process.

Healthy Learners serves all grade levels in the following school districts: Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon 3, 4, Fairfield, Georgetown, Greenwood 50, 51, 52, Hampton, Laurens 55, Lexington 2, 4, Lexington Richland 5, Marion, Newberry, Richland 1, 2, and Williamsburg. All Healthy Learners programs operate on the school year calendar.

Healthy Learners services include:

- Vision Care, including glasses replacement
- Dental Care
- Hearing Evaluation
- Asthma Care
- Health Care
- Mental/Behavioral Health Care
- Coordination of Care
- Transportation to Appointments
- Assistance with Medicaid Application Process

Healthy Learners cannot pay for surgeries, major outpatient tests, hospitalizations or emergency room visits.

Healthy Learners reserves the right to make decisions concerning referrals or services to students in the best interest of the safety of the students and of our staff.

General Instructions

- The paperwork for a Healthy Learners referral consists of consent forms and a health history. We cannot accept outdated versions of Healthy Learners paperwork. Referral paperwork is not considered complete until we receive the original, signed copy. We strongly recommend completing the paperwork in pen. Please mail, fax, or email your completed forms to your respective program area. The address for each Healthy Learners program is listed in the front of the School Nurse Handbook.
- Page 2 of the Healthy Learners consent form includes several authorization statements that address the laws governing the privacy of students' health and educational records and asks for additional parental consent for program evaluation and data collection. Parental permission is needed to obtain certain school performance and academic achievement data on our students to establish outcome measures and to document for our funders that Healthy Learners services are helpful to children and families. **Please explain to parents that in order for Healthy Learners to continue serving children we need their support and cooperation in completing all forms.**
- A copy of the child's screening results (usually the school's parent notification letter) should also be included with the referral. The doctor will record his/her findings on this form and the Healthy Learners staff person will provide the school nurse with a copy of the results when they return the child to school.
- Please make sure the parent or guardian fills out the forms completely and includes the child's Social Security number and date of birth in the student information section. Forms should be completed in ink.
- The parents need to check whether they want Healthy Learners to provide transportation or whether they will provide their own transportation. If the parent chooses to transport their own child, then a member of the Healthy Learners staff will meet them at the provider's office. Healthy Learners is available to provide transportation for students to and from school to scheduled appointments – Healthy Learners does not provide transportation for the parents.
- Once the original paperwork is received in Healthy Learners' office, an appointment will be made, and an appointment notice will be sent to the school nurse via email with a read receipt request. This notice serves as the parent's notification of the appointment as well as the nurse's notification. Please print two copies of the notice and sign both copies. One copy should be sent home to the parents and the second copy should be kept for your school records.
- If there is a conflict with the appointment date and time such as a field trip or school wide testing, please let the Healthy Learners office know as soon as possible. Please ask parents to let you know if there is a conflict with an appointment date or time and to not call the provider to reschedule on their own. All appointments for Healthy Learners must be scheduled through our office.
- Children may be referred more than once and for more than one service in a school year, (i.e., dental and vision). We no longer require annual consent forms.

- Healthy Learners consent forms and appointment notices are available in Spanish and a link to the forms can be found in the back of the handbook and on our website. Revised/updated forms are available on our website at the beginning of the school year.
- When referring Hispanic students please indicate if the student speaks English and if so, how well he/she speaks English. Interpretation services are available when necessary and with advance notice.
- The school nurse handbook is available on each program's home page of our website (healthylearners.com). Consent forms are also available in the same section with the school nurse handbook. Usernames and passwords are no longer required.
- If you are referring a student with special health concerns, please notify the Healthy Learners staff of the child's specific needs at the time of making the referral (for example, a wheelchair bound student or a student with behavioral or emotional issues).
- Again, if you are unsure about referring a student and you have questions, please call your local Healthy Learners program. We are here to help in any way possible.
- A link for the Instructional Video on how to fill out a Consent Form is included in the Appendix.

Vision Referrals

Overview:

Healthy Learners may pay for an eye exam and glasses for eligible students who fail the school screening exam and/or are experiencing visual difficulties.

School Nurse - Vision Referral Steps:

- Have the student's parent or guardian fill out the Healthy Learners consent form and health history. Please also refer to General Instructions, pages 3-4.
- Attach a copy of your referral letter along with the student's vision screening results and mail the original paperwork to the Healthy Learners office.
- If referring a student for glasses only, please obtain a copy of the student's current eyeglass prescription from their provider and attach to the Healthy Learners paperwork. Prescriptions for eyeglasses are good for 1 year from the date of exam.

After a Referral Has Been Received:

- If eligible, Healthy Learners will take the student for an eye exam and if glasses are prescribed, Healthy Learners will deliver glasses to school when ready. Glasses are usually ready within a week to 10 business days. Medicaid glasses can take up to 4 weeks.
- Medicaid pays for only 1 eye exam and 1 pair of glasses per calendar year; **therefore**, Healthy Learners will cover the cost of replacing lost or broken glasses for Medicaid students who are within their year benefit period. **As an added benefit for all Medicaid plans, students will be eligible to receive a second pair of glasses from First Choice within a calendar year.**
- **Healthy Learners will pay for a replacement pair of glasses for an individual student who has lost or broken them. Healthy Learners reserves the right to limit the replacement of glasses in the event of intentional abuse or careless handling.**

Hearing Referrals

Overview:

Healthy Learners may pay for an ENT evaluation for students who have failed the hearing screening at school or for other ear/ hearing related problems.

School Nurse - Hearing Referral Steps:

- Have the parents fill out the Healthy Learners consent form and health history. Please also refer to General Instructions, pages 3-4.
- Attach a copy of the parent's referral letter that includes the screening results and mail the original paperwork to the Healthy Learners office.

After a Referral Has Been Received:

- If eligible, the Healthy Learners Community Manager will schedule an appointment for an audiological exam and physician evaluation.
- Check with your local Healthy Learners program for the ENT provider in your area. The policy of some providers requires the parent to be present at the child's appointment.
- Generally, the child sees the audiologist first for the hearing test and then the doctor. If medications, such as antibiotics or antihistamines are prescribed, Healthy Learners will have the prescriptions filled and will bring the medication to the school nurse when the child is returned to school.
- Surgery is not included in the scope of services provided by Healthy Learners. If ear tubes or other surgery is recommended, Healthy Learners may be able to help with applying for Medicaid and/or a referral to another source.

Dental Referrals

Overview:

Healthy Learners, in partnership with local area dentists, provide dental care to students in need. The Healthy Learners Community Manager will arrange appointments and coordinate dental care.

School Nurse – Dental Referral Steps:

- Have the parents fill out the Healthy Learners consent form and health history. Please also refer to General Instructions, pages 3-4.
- Provide a brief description of the dental problem. Providers need to know specific problems so they can allot enough time for the appointment.
- Determine if student has seen a dental provider before and note on health history.
- You may fax the referral to Healthy Learners, but you must also mail the original paperwork to us.

After a Referral Has Been Received:

- If eligible, the Healthy Learners Community Manager will schedule an appointment with an appropriate dental provider.
- Emergent/urgent dental problems may require that the parent seek urgent care or treatment elsewhere for immediate needs. Scheduling appointments for dental care sometimes takes several weeks to coordinate both the Healthy Learners and provider schedules. Discuss these situations with the Healthy Learners Community Manager.

Note:

Healthy Learners Lowcountry

Any student with dental needs should be referred directly to the Allendale Smiles Dental Clinic.

Healthy Learners Pee Dee

Students with dental needs should be referred directly to the Dillon Smiles Dental Clinic. HL Pee Dee can assist in transporting students to receive dental care at the Smiles Clinic. HL Pee Dee may also assist in transporting Medicaid-eligible students to receive care from other local dental providers who partner with Healthy Learners.

Healthy Learners Midlands

Healthy Learners Midlands has reserved appointment days each month at both the Richland and Lexington Dental Clinics for our uninsured students. Click on the Healthy Learners Midlands Dental Clinic Details located in the Appendix.

Counseling Services

Overview:

Healthy Learners will assist with referrals to local mental health agencies for students referred by their school nurse for behavioral concerns, attention problems, depression, etc. Students referred for counseling services typically have needs that exceed the resources available at the school. Referrals for disciplinary and/or attendance issues may not meet the criteria for referral to Healthy Learners. Medical or specific health-related reasons should accompany the referral.

School Nurse - Counseling Referral Steps:

- If a student is being referred for counseling, have the parent or guardian fill out the Healthy Learners consent form and health history. The HL Community Manager will contact the local mental health agency to begin the referral process and follow their intake procedure. A narrative note from the child's teacher or guidance counselor explaining the problem and behaviors/difficulties observed is helpful in making the referral. Please also refer to General Instructions, pages 3-4.
- Please mail the original paperwork to the Healthy Learners office.

After a Referral Has Been Received:

- If eligible the Healthy Learners Community Manager will assess the reason for referral and if an emergency exists, will respond appropriately.
- Appropriate steps will be taken to initiate referral to the local mental health agency according to the individual agency's guidelines. Healthy Learners will assist with the immediate need for counseling services until such time that the child's care can be transitioned to a provider within the local mental health agency or one that accepts Medicaid should the child become eligible.

Medications

Overview:

Healthy Learners may cover the cost of prescription medications for eligible students referred by the school nurse. These medications include, but are not limited to, antibiotics, ADHD medications, antidepressants, asthma medications, etc.

The most common prescription requests we receive are for medications for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Medicines classified as controlled substances (e.g., Ritalin, Adderall, Concerta, Focalin, Vyvanse) require a new prescription each month and must be dated no more than 90 days prior to the current date. Strattera and Intuniv are examples of ADHD medications that are not controlled substances and can be refilled without a new prescription.

School Nurse - Medication Referral Steps:

- Have the parent or guardian fill out the Healthy Learners consent form and health history and bring the original prescription to you. Please also refer to General Instructions, pages 3-4.
- You may fax this paperwork along with a copy of the prescription – keep the original prescription with you. A Healthy Learners staff member will pick up the original prescription when the medication is delivered to school. Mail the original Healthy Learners consent forms and health history to our office.

After a Referral Has Been Received:

- If eligible, prescription medications can be filled at a participating pharmacy provider and either delivered to the school or picked up by the parent.
- A Healthy Learners staff person must authorize all prescription medications. Therefore, when medication is needed (new prescriptions or refills), a parent or guardian must first contact their school nurse who will then contact Healthy Learners for approval. Once authorization is given, the parent/guardian may go to the pharmacy to pick up the medication if desired or the medication can be delivered to the school nurse.
- Medications are delivered to the school nurse upon returning the child to school. It is the responsibility of the school nurse to inform the parent of the instructions for giving the medicine and to send the medication home according to district policy and procedure.
- Students referred to Healthy Learners for assistance with certain long-term prescription needs may be referred to an appropriate provider. Contact your local Healthy Learners program for provider-specific information. Healthy Learners will assist in the referral process.
- Prescription assistance programs are offered directly from the pharmaceutical companies that make the medications. These programs are available to families who meet specific income guidelines and who do not have Medicaid or private insurance. A couple of website resources for information on these programs are www.needymeds.com and www.rxassist.org. School nurses are encouraged to provide this information to parents of

students who are on long-term medications. Healthy Learners will assist in providing medications in the short term while the application process for either these prescription assistance programs or Medicaid is being completed.

Episodic Visits

Overview:

Healthy Learners may cover the cost of visits to the nurse practitioner or the pediatrician for students who have health concerns such as asthma, allergies, ringworm of the scalp, evaluation of attention problems, etc. Visits to the pediatrician or nurse practitioner are made on a case-by-case basis and are typically short-term, resolving the presenting problem.

Healthy Learners is not designed for acute medical needs, as we schedule appointments approximately 2 weeks in advance based on the provider's availability. In the event of medical emergencies, the parent should take the child to the Emergency Room.

School Nurse - Episodic Visits Referral Steps:

- Have the parent or guardian fill out the Healthy Learners consent form and health history. Please also refer to General Instructions, pages 3-4.
- Please mail the original paperwork to the Healthy Learners office.

After a Referral Has Been Received:

- If eligible, the Healthy Learners Community Manager will make an appointment for the student with an appropriate pediatrician or nurse practitioner.
- All visits to the nurse practitioner or pediatrician require written authorization from Healthy Learners. An authorization form will be presented at the time of the visit or may be faxed ahead in certain situations.
- It is helpful for the parent to attend this type of appointment, as they are knowledgeable about their child's medical history.
- If follow-up appointments are needed, Healthy Learners staff will relay information to the parents through the school nurse.
- It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the Healthy Learners office if they are contacted directly from the provider's office about a return or follow-up visit. Charges for visits made to a provider without prior approval or authorization by Healthy Learners are the responsibility of the parent/guardian.
- Check with your local Healthy Learners program for provider information, a sliding fee scale and reduced rates, if applicable.

Other Services

Overview:

Other services provided by Healthy Learners include medical needs that have not been previously described. Appointments with a dermatologist, neurologist or other specialist, along with care coordination services are examples of types of Other Services. Assistance with the completion and submission of an application for Medicaid is another example of Other Services.

School Nurse - Other Referral Steps:

- The school nurse should consult with the Healthy Learners Community Manager first about students with specific medical needs not previously defined.
- Once a decision is made about service provision, the school nurse will have the parent fill out the Healthy Learners consent and health history forms and other pertinent health information. Please also refer to General Instructions, pages 3-4.

After a Referral Has Been Received:

- The Healthy Learners Community Manager will find an appropriate provider based on a student's specific need and schedule an appointment.
- If the request is for assistance with the Medicaid process, Healthy Learners staff will work with the parent/guardian to complete and apply.
- Healthy Learners staff will promote abstinence-based education only. Information will be shared for treatment purposes, but in no way will contraceptives be discussed, distributed or recommended to any student.
- Healthy Learners will in no way materially assist or cooperate with abortion.

Healthy Learners Program Evaluation

Overview:

Program evaluation is one tool in which we tell our “Healthy Learners Story” – combining the stories of individual lives of children that we impact, along with numbers that support and document the impact having access to basic health care services has on children we serve. Our goal is that every child we serve be equipped to perform to their fullest potential because of the services we can provide.

Healthy Learners utilizes various program evaluation measures in telling our “Healthy Learners Story.” Program evaluation enables us to measure the benefits and impact of our program, expand or improve our services for program planning purposes, and obtain and maintain grant funding or other financial support to continue providing services to children at little to no cost to families. As a ministry and non-profit organization, we are accountable to our funders, our community, our health care providers/partners, our schools, and most importantly – the children and families we serve.

In addition to the high standards and external expectations we are held to by our funders, internally we continually strive for excellence and ongoing improvement. This involves asking ourselves each day from a program evaluation perspective, “What could we do better or more efficiently so that we maximize our resources available to meet our mission?” Program Goals, Objectives and Outcomes are established annually at the beginning of each school year. Healthy Learners evaluates the effectiveness of our services utilizing various evaluation methods such as surveys of constituents (parents, students, school nurses, providers and/or teachers), focus groups, tracking of data and return on investment (ROI).

All information obtained through our program evaluation measures is kept confidential. Evaluation reports for publication or made available to the public contain only information that is summarized or grouped and does not use any names or identifying information.

We welcome any input, suggestions, and feedback you may have at any time so we can continue to improve our services to children and our overall program. If you have any questions about our program evaluation measures, please do not hesitate to contact the Executive Director at (803) 454-0350.

SCHOOL NURSE CHECKLIST FOR ELIGIBILITY FOR HEALTHY LEARNERS

Use this checklist to help determine a student's eligibility for Healthy Learners services. Please call the Healthy Learners office if you have any questions.

- Is the student on (or eligible) for free or reduced lunch? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Does the student qualify or currently have Medicaid? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Does the student **lack** private health insurance/Medicaid, or if private health insurance/Medicaid is present, are certain health services not covered (i.e., vision, dental, prescriptions, etc.)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please check the service(s) not covered by private health insurance.

- ☐ dental
- ☐ vision
- ☐ prescription
- ☐ other (Please list _____)

- Do they need help with transportation? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do they need interpretation Services ☐ Yes ☐ No

*If you checked **yes** to any of the above, the student may be eligible to receive Healthy Learners Services.*

Please call the Healthy Learners Office today!

General Information About Medicaid (Healthy Connections)

Medicaid (Healthy Connections) offers health and dental coverage for children (ages 1-19) through the Partners for Healthy Children Medicaid program. Children in families with income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level may qualify (Medicaid eligibility in SC is 208%). The link below provides the current Federal Poverty Level guidelines.

<https://sclegal.org/income-guidelines/>

Application:

A paper application (Form 3400) can be downloaded from the Dept. of Health & Human Services website <http://www.scdhhs.gov/> under the section titled “Getting Medicaid.” Applications for Medicaid programs can also be completed online at the same web address.

Healthy Learners Assistance with Medicaid Applications:

If the parent/guardian requests assistance from Healthy Learners with the Medicaid application process, the parent/guardian must complete and sign a 1282 form giving their permission. This form is titled “Authorization for Release of Information and Appointment of Authorized Representative for Medicaid Applications/Reviews and Appeals.”

Thrive Hub (SC Thrive’s online benefit information platform):

SC Thrive 1-800-726-8774.

Other locations open to the public in your local program area:

Allendale

Southeastern Housing Foundation in Barnwell – For appointments, please call (803) 259-4609.

Allendale County Adult Education – For appointments, please call (803) 584-3107.

Dillon

Pee Dee Healthy Start - For appointments, please call (843) 423-4332.

Door of Hope Christian Church - For appointments, please call (843) 260-1914.

Georgetown

Carvers Bay Branch Library - For appointments, please call (843) 545-3515.

St. Vincent De Paul Society - For appointments, please call (843) 651-0343.

Greenwood

Community Initiatives of Greenwood – For appointments, please call (864) 223-7472.

Free Clinic Abbeville – For appointments, please call (864) 366-0365.

Midlands

Healthy Columbia (Downtown Columbia) – For appointments, please call (803) 667-9630.

First Choice Community Center (3315 Broad River Road, Columbia) - For appointments, please call (803) 731-1207.

Lexington Interfaith Community Services (LICS) – located in Lexington County - For appointments, please call (803) 957-6656.

Medicaid Application Process – Helpful Hints

- The turnaround time for applications is 30-45 days. This time frame applies when all documentation is complete the first time an application is submitted.
- If more documentation is needed, the parent/guardian must provide the necessary documents to the caseworker within 21 days or the application will be cancelled, and a new application must be started.
- Proof of income must be for a one-month period – acceptable forms of proof include copies of pay stubs or a letter from the employer that shows the last 4 weeks of gross pay.
- Proof of all other types of income (earned and unearned) such as Social Security, Unemployment, VA benefits for the same 4-week period must also be included.
- If there is no income, the parent must write a letter explaining how the family is living and how they are paying their bills. A Declaration Statement form will need to be completed and signed by the person who is providing support.
- In order to have Medicaid cover bills retroactively, the applicant has to make the request on the application and provide the most recent three months income documentation.
- In most cases, the eligibility worker can verify identity and citizenship through the child's social security number. If necessary, the caseworker will request to see the child's original birth certificate.
- If requested, the original copy of the child's birth certificate must be presented to the Medicaid caseworker or the Healthy Learners staff member who will make a Xerox copy and stamp and sign it as verified. Please advise parents NOT to mail in birth certificates to DHHS.
- A Social Security number must be provided only for the person for whom Medicaid benefits are being requested. This should be helpful for undocumented parents who have children born in the US and who are eligible to receive benefits.
- Encourage parents to turn their applications into a caseworker face-to-face who can automatically tell them if something is missing or something else is needed. Parents need to be proactive in following up on their application.
- Express Lane Eligibility automatically enrolls eligible children (under the age of 19) in families receiving SNAP benefits in Medicaid (Healthy Connections).

APPENDIX

[CONSENT FORM TRACKING LOG](#)

[HEALTHY LEARNERS CONSENT FORM INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO](#)

[HEALTHY LEARNERS CONSENT FORM - ENGLISH](#)

[HEALTHY LEARNERS CONSENT FORM - SPANISH](#)

[HEALTHY LEARNERS APPOINTMENT NOTICE \(HLT\) - BL](#)

[HEALTHY LEARNERS APPOINTMENT NOTICE \(PT\) - BL](#)

[TEACHER LETTER](#)

[HEALTHY LEARNERS MIDLANDS DENTAL CLINIC DETAILS](#)