

# HERE FOR THE KIDS.



The School-Based Health Center Model at work in Massachusetts

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Since 1989, the School-Based Health Center (SBHC) Program has been providing comprehensive health care to hard-to-reach kids across the Commonwealth, including at-risk youth, refugee and immigrant children and those with special health care needs.

School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) offer primary health care and behavioral health services right where kids spend most of their time ... at school. They respond quickly to routine health problems like ear infections and

sore throats, and manage chronic health conditions like asthma to prevent crises and treat symptoms immediately. The goal of SBHC care is to keep kids healthy and prevent them from missing precious time in class.

SBHCs are aligned with the major concern of schools: academic achievement. They have strategies to improve instruction and successful learning. Beyond a focus on primary health care, SBHCs aim to meet the social and emotional needs of children to help them reach their individual potential. The integration of health and education makes good sense; healthy kids learn better. Conversely, students who feel confident about their studies and are better learners are more likely to graduate and become healthy, productive adults.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) funds 37 SBHCs. They are located in 17 cities and towns throughout Massachusetts, mostly in high schools. The program is administered by MDPH through partnerships with 18 agencies,







including community health centers, hospitals and local health departments. Operating like satellite clinics in the school setting, SBHCs have expertise in treating the most common health problems of childhood and adolescence. They offer students a safe place to receive care and make it easy to find the support of a trusted adult.



resulted in students returning to class, maximizing "time in learning." 1 (2008-9)

#### HEALTH AND EDUCATION UNDER ONE ROOF

## On a given day, the SBHC clinician might see:

- A child complaining of swollen glands, sore throat and extreme fatigue
- A young man who needs a sports physical to begin team training
- A child with chronic stomachaches
- · A child with a dislocated shoulder
- A young man who is concerned about a lump at the base of his testicle

ICEBRA 1

• A young woman with severe acne and menstrual cramps

"A doctor's office can only see patients as fast as they can get there. The best thing about School-Based Health Centers is they take care of the children where the children are. We are able to give kids access

Profile

Center

Health

School-Based

#### **MDPH School-Based Health Center Core Components**

Comprehensive primary health care Risk and resiliency assessments Behavioral health services Oral health care Care coordination Collaboration with community health care services and other

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community-based resources

Serve all students, regardless of ability to pay

- Partnership between public schools and health care systems
- Licensed by MDPH Division of Health Care Quality
- Operate in accordance with MDPH Quality Standards
- Require parental consent
- Comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to primary care, including: physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, dentists, dental hygienists, registered dieticians, clinical social workers, mental health professionals, counselors, health educators, graduate students in training

#### Located in areas with:

- · Documented limited access to primary health care
- · High absenteeism and dropout rates
- · High rates of eligibility for free- or reduced-cost school lunch

#### Unique Strategies for Health and Hope.

#### **Risk and Resiliency Screening.** Recognizing strengths.

Planning for success.

Public health research has found that certain health behaviors and environmental factors interact to put a child or adolescent more at risk or make them more resilient to the challenges of life. For example, students who engage in risky behaviors like carrying weapons or drinking alcohol are more likely to fail in school and feel isolated. In contrast, kids who feel more connected to their school and have a trusted adult in their lives tend to be healthier and more successful.

School-Based Health Center clinicians are focused on helping kids believe there is a promising future for them. They understand the developmental challenges of childhood and adolescence; they know how to listen so that kids will talk. SBHC clinicians use specific interviewing methods and screening tools to look at the 'big picture' and to identify the characteristics and behaviors that put kids at risk or keep them strong and healthy. Using this information, they help students develop a plan that includes taking care of their bodies and incorporates behavioral goals. The plan builds upon students' strengths and uses strategies to increase their motivation to change unhealthy behaviors.

Periodic check-ins help clinicians monitor students' progress toward achieving goals and provide an opportunity to reinforce the efforts they make to reduce risks.

In surveys, SBHC students rate privacy, trust and comfort as 'very important' aspects of the care they receive. SBHC clinicians understand the importance of positive and nurturing relationships. Their compassion is a core element of SBHC care.

#### **Top 10 Risk Factors Among SBHC Students**

Risk factors serve as a warning of problem behavior that needs positive support.

- Bullying
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Tobacco, Drug, or Alcohol Use
- School Failure
- Sexually Transmitted Infections
- Teen Pregnancy
- Nutrition Problems
- Lack of Physical Activity
- Truancy



"It's much easier if we can do all the support services in this building. Families feel comfortable here, and for a lot of students this is their safe place. They can get the physical and mental health care they need."

Elizabeth Wood, School Adjustment Counselor, Putnam Vocational Technical High School, Springfield

SBHCs screen students for protective factors and behaviors that promote feelings of confidence and self-worth. They encourage students to get involved in positive youth development activities that are known to counter risk factors and offer protective value, including:

- Access to Structured Activities
- Opportunities for Community
- School Connectedness\*
- Motivation to Succeed in School
- · Relationship with a Trusted Adult
- Involvement in Sports
- Involvement in Gay/Straight Alliance or Community-Based Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Support

#### SBHC as "Health Central": Connecting the dots

records for each SBHC student and works to coordinate care by linking the primary care provider with other health care providers. This not only builds an integrated network of health services in the community for these children, it also avoids costly duplication of services. Such comprehensive care keeps kids from falling through the cracks of our complex health care system.

#### Preventing problems, staying healthy

SBHCs offer comprehensive health care, which is reflected in diverse staffing, including physicians, nurse practitioners, physician

\*School connectedness-the belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals





# Protective factors. Fortifying kids. CONNECTED.

Service and Civic Participation

# SBHC staff keeps centralized

assistants, nurses, dentists and dental hygienists, nutritionists, clinical social workers, mental health professionals, counselors, health educators and graduate students in training.

Our strength comes from our clinicians' experience in pediatric and adolescent medicine.

Together with school nurses and the student support staff, we form an interdisciplinary team that provides students with the best possible care.

#### Primary health care services\*

Physicals Immunizations

Comprehensive health assessments for school, sports and employment

Referrals to other specialty providers

Care coordination for students with special health care needs

Treatment of acute injuries

Lab tests and screening, including HIV counseling and testing

Reproductive health services

Oral health evaluations and treatment

Nutrition counseling

Health insurance enrollment Health education

Prescriptions for medications

#### **Behavioral health** services\*

Behavioral health assessments, such as depression screening

Individual and group counseling

Substance use screening, brief interventions, referral to treatment

\* Services are tailored to communities based on needs at the local level

## Management of chronic health problems.

When not properly managed. chronic health conditions like diabetes and asthma can result in missed time in the classroom. Since SBHC clinicians are skilled at providing asthma care, they can help children and families monitor symptoms closely. They can teach parents what triggers to avoid, how to administer medications and how to know when to get help. Since the SBHC functions

as a medical office, clinicians can administer medical interventions, such as nebulizer treatments onsite, preventing the need for a visit to the emergency room or the doctor's office. The goal of SBHC care is to keep students' asthma under control and to avoid emergencies by working with students and families to develop clear and effective asthma action plans.

PRESE

Similarly, SBHC clinicians provide education for children who are diabetic, teaching them how to maintain a healthy blood sugar level and manage it through proper diet and exercise. Since clinicians see students on a day-to-day basis, symptoms can be continuously monitored. In addition, SBHC staff can provide resources to students and their parents for specialty care at

facilities like the Joslin Diabetes Center or Children's Hospital Boston. Proactive management of chronic health conditions translates into fewer medical emergencies, fewer health care dollars spent and more time in learning.

## 23% of MA high school students reported ever being told by a health care professional that

they had asthma.<sup>2</sup> (2007)

"When students stay in school, parents are not forced to leave work. This reduces the economic impact that asthma has on families."

- Matthew Sadoff, MD, FAAP Baystate Children's Hospital, Springfield

## Side-by-side comparison of treating students with asthma at an SBHC versus an ER visit

#### Office visit/SBHC visit: \$125-200

(provided by Dr. Matthew Sadoff, Baystate Children's Hospital) Emergency room visit: \$500 (Grant, et al. 2010) Asthma hospitalization: \$7,000 (Grant, et al. 2010)

You can care for a child with asthma in an office or SBHC for approximately a third of what it would cost in the emergency room, and for about 2% of the cost of a pediatric hospitalization.

- All treatment costs may vary depending on the facility where the child is seen, as well as the intensity of the asthma attack.

SBHC

Visit

Grant, R. et al. 2010. Health Care Savings Attributable to Integrating Guildelines-based Asthma Care in the Pediatric Medical Home. Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved.







**Emergency Room** Visit

Asthma Hospitalization

## On any given day, an SBHC mental health counselor might see:

- A girl who indicated on her risk assessment that she wants support dealing with her depression
- A small child who refuses to come to school and seems anxious
- A young woman who has recently been sexually assaulted and breaks down in the classroom
- A young person who has recently immigrated and feels isolated and alone
- A student who has punched a wall and is in danger of being suspended for anger problems
- A child with obsessive compulsive disorder who is being teased



Interactive exhibits pump up the learning at a health fair Vision screening and referrals for optometry Cyberbullying facts presented by local police department Interactive simulations of drunk driving or driving while texting Skin exams by dermatologist and education on the harmful effects of tanning Audiology testing of MP3 player volume, and education on

the link to hearing loss Body Mass Index (BMI) and blood cholesterol screening

Summer internship opportunities presented by local community health centers



Paul Hyry, Principal, Peck School, Holyoke

## Health Education

SBHC health professionals work with the school community to raise awareness of important health issues. An SBHC is uniquely positioned to reach out to a broad base of students through classroom teaching on topics ranging from nutrition and exercise to dating violence. They have the skills and resources to organize health fairs and to implement school-wide prevention programs. Health fairs offer students, teachers and the community a chance to get acquainted with their SBHC and learn more about health issues that impact their school, city or town. The informal atmosphere creates a kind of energy that encourages learning, while interactive exhibits make the take-away information more memorable.

## Tobacco Prevention and Cessation

Kids often learn about the dangers of smoking in health class, but the SBHC at Putnam Vocational Technical High School in Springfield goes a step farther to protect kids by providing teenspecific treatment and cessation counseling. Every time students visit the SBHC, they are asked about their tobacco use...if they are smoking and if they would like to stop. Kids who are found smoking on school grounds are referred to the SBHC where they receive guidance on how to quit. One-on-one sessions give students the support they need to make it through the quitting process.

## **Behavioral** Health Care

#### Identifying and treating the problems that keep kids from learning.

From post-traumatic stress to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and adjustment problems, behavioral health issues can create barriers to learning. Some kids suffering from these disorders complain that they are tired or distracted or don't come to school. Early detection and appropriate responses to these problems can give kids a chance to have a more successful school experience.

Validated screening tools are used in all SBHCs to help clinicians identify possible reasons for concern. For example, the Pediatric Symptom Checklist is used to identify symptoms of depression in children and youth, and the CRAFFT is used to identify concerns around alcohol use. Beyond the initial screening, SBHC clinicians receive training on how to respond to 'red flags,' and how to engage students and families in getting necessary treatment.

Currently, there is a shortage of mental health providers for children and adolescents in Massachusetts, SBHCs help fill that void by identifying problems, providing referrals for specialty care and helping to coordinate and monitor the effects of psychopharmacological medications.

#### Signs Of Suicide (SOS) Screening

To help prevent suicide, a growing concern among adolescents, Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School uses a hybrid SOS program. The guidance department, school nurse and SBHC collaborate to screen all freshmen with their parents' consent. Students are evaluated with the BSAD (Brief Screen for Adolescent Depression) guestionnaire. For those identified as "at risk." a plan is developed which links students with their guidance counselor, the SBHC clinician or, in urgent cases, a counselor from Riverside Community Care, a communitybased mental health provider. In addition, the SBHC clinician visits the classroom to educate students on how to recognize the signs of suicide and encourage them to speak up about friends who may need help. The SBHC offers education to school staff and faculty as well, since reaching out to the entire school community regarding this issue makes for a healthier school as a whole.

"I have worked in a School-Based Health Center for many years collaborating with teachers, families and school nurses in an effort to provide an anchor for troubled teenagers. I have devoted my professional career to fortifying kids, preventing and treating depression and suicide while decreasing the stigma that surrounds the need for psychological services."

- Nancy Rappaport, SBHC Psychiatrist, Cambridge



"We recognize that for some students academics is not their top priority and the staff needs to be supportive of their emotional health to help them focus on learning."

- Kacie Fyrberg, NP, Salem High School

## Nutrition and Exercise. Fuel for learning.

ready to learn.

healthy habits.



## Engaging students. Healthy Boost to the graduation rate.

There are many reasons why kids drop out of school, including pregnancy, emotional issues, substance use and bullying. With the goal of keeping kids in school, SBHCs are not only helping students build a brighter future, they are also helping tackle a public health problem. Research suggests that dropout rates and health disparities are linked. High school graduates are more likely to earn more money, enjoy a safer, healthier lifestyle and ultimately require fewer public resources.

SBHCs aim to create learning opportunities on topics that are relevant to teens. Their interests range from nutrition and exercise to violence prevention and pregnancy prevention. The goal is to engage kids in learning about what matters to them. This helps to enhance their feelings of connection to school and encourages them to stay.

In addition, SBHC staff builds trust with students. Current studies suggest that if a student has a trusted, caring adult in her/his life, this significantly increases their chance of academic success. Oftentimes, trust begins with an adult who is part of the SBHC program.

Positive Directions at South High School in Worcester is one example of a dropout prevention program that works. Eligible SBHC students attend an after-school tutoring program where they are connected with mentors. Participants are encouraged to become involved in positive youth development programs like Youth in Government and Minority Achievers. They are also given free passes to the local YMCA where they can participate in healthy exercise. This kind of programming fosters school and community connectedness and a sense of belonging.







Teaching students about eating healthy and getting fit is a goal in every SBHC across the Commonwealth. With obesity rates rising among youth and adolescents in Massachusetts, activities that focus on nutrition and exercise are critical in keeping kids healthy and

The Stay in Shape Program at Revere and Chelsea High Schools has been promoting a healthy lifestyle for over 10 years. In this after-school program, students learn about the benefits of eating a healthy breakfast, eating more fruits and vegetables, understanding food labels, limiting television time and exercising daily. Learning practical skills can help to establish lifelong

The Garden project at Doherty Memorial High School in Worcester demonstrates how the SBHC addresses a potential health problem among the families that have immigrated to the city. Before coming to Massachusetts, these families ate healthy foods native to their home countries. But many have adopted unhealthy processed junk food into their diets as they have become accustomed to the American diet. Participants in the Garden project plant an ethnic garden and attend an after-school program around it. The Garden brings together students and their families with an activity that encourages healthy nutrition and exercise. It also helps immigrant families preserve their cultural values as they integrate into their new community.





"It's a lot of fun to work outside with my friends and family with the Garden Club. Most of us can't wait until harvest time... then we get to eat what we've grown and use them in family recipes!"

- William, Student, Sullivan Middle School, Worcester

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students in Massachusetts fail to graduate each year. The majority are from urban, low-income, minority families.<sup>4</sup>



"My daughter was worried about going into 9th grade, she was scared she would be hazed by the seniors. Becoming a Safe School Ambassador has made her feel safer and feel like she's helping other kids not be bullied."

- Parent of an 8th grader, Peck School, Holyoke

## **Violence Prevention Programs.** Learning how to stay safe in and out of school.

Kids learn best in a safe environment. If the school climate is hostile or unwelcoming, kids retreat, disconnect and try to protect themselves any way they can. The dangers range from bullying and weapon-carrying to dating and gang violence. By screening students for risk factors, school-based health centers identify the types of violence experienced and make the connections to programs that can provide support.

SBHCs collaborate with community partners on initiatives that address violence in the school and community. For example, Blackstone Valley Technical Institute is working with the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center to develop anti-bullying strategies for their school, and the Lynn Police Department is training SBHC staff on signs of gang involvement in youth. The Salem High SBHC clinician has been trained by the local

Rape Crisis Center to be part of the schoolwide violence response team. By connecting to resources in their cities and towns, SBHCs help kids stay safe and able to learn.

#### Bullying:

Something schools cannot ignore. Over half of students surveyed as Massachusetts college freshman between fall 2006 and spring 2008 reported that students in their high school had avoided coming to school "often" or "sometimes" because they were bullied. Fifty-two percent reported being harassed, bullied threatened or stalked once a week to once a month during their high school years.<sup>5</sup> Most Massachusetts public school educators surveyed estimated that bullying occurs in their school "several times each day" (2008).<sup>6</sup> It takes schools, kids, parents, and communities working together to stop bullying.



## The Safe School Ambassador Program

SBHCs support the Safe School Ambassador Program (SSA) at Dean Technical High School and the Peck School in Holyoke. SSA harnesses student power to improve the school climate. The goal is to increase respect for every student and decrease violence and bullying both inside and outside of school. Teachers choose the most influential students

and community.

to participate as student ambassadors. Through small-group training and role playing exercises, student ambassadors learn skills to diffuse anger and to resolve conflict.

Positive peer modeling helps set a tone of respect and creates a more peaceful school

**72%** 

of MA high school students reported having been the victim of bullying.<sup>2</sup> (2007)



### Teen pregnancy and parenting. Changing bodies, new roles.

Teen pregnancy and teen parenting are the major reasons girls drop out of school. SBHCs address these issues by supporting special programs intended to keep adolescents in school and encourage them to graduate. Graduation and Attendance for Pregnant and Parenting Students (GAPPS) at Chelsea High School is a support group where teens can talk to each other and gain strength and comfort from knowing that they are not alone. They focus on stressors, relationships, barriers to success and arranging for home schooling during maternity leave. Even though their lives are changing dramatically, GAPPS lets students feel connected and valued and reinforces the importance of staying in school.



## Working hand-in-hand: A proven track record.

Administered by the Boston Public Health Commission, the SBHC at Madison Park High School takes care of almost half the kids who are enrolled there. Working closely with the school nurses and other support services within the school and local community, SBHC clinicians are involved in every aspect of their students' health.

Primary care responsibilities include sports physicals, management of acute and chronic problems, and reproductive and behavioral health services. SBHC clinicians work closely with Boston Medical Center to ensure that students have access to specialty clinics located at the hospital. Specialty areas range from dermatological issues to orthopedic problems requiring surgery and infectious diseases needing urgent

treatment. The Madison SBHC connects kids to specialty care and then functions as the pivotal link to ensure clear communication between all treatment providers.

At Madison Park, the SBHC clinician and school nurses play a key role as health educators teaching kids about basic wellness, oral health, nutrition, exercise, relaxation techniques, healthy dating, and safer sexual practices. Their major collaboration is the Pregnancy Prevention Program in which teen parents speak candidly with the 9th grade students about the challenges of raising a baby. This helps reinforce a message about delaying pregnancy and the importance of finishing high school.





"The SBHC takes care of me and my baby. Without the SBHC I would have dropped out, but now I'm graduating this year."

- Madelin, Teen Parent Program, Salem High School



**School-Based Health Centers.** Schools and communities building a foundation for academic success.

### Want to learn more?

Each School-Based Health Center is designed to serve the unique needs of the students, school, and community where it's located. If you're interested in learning more about School-Based Health Centers in your area, or if you'd just like to learn more about SBHCs in general, please visit the Department of Public Health online at www.mass.gov/dph/schoolbasedhealthcenters or by phone at 617-624-6000 (TTY/TTD: 617-624-6001).







Massachusetts Department of Public Health

#### Information gathered from the following sources:

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