

Eleven Communities Receive Planning Grants for School Based Health Centers

The Department of Health is awarding grants to 11 communities across the state to develop local plans for school based health centers. “Adolescents are the least likely population to access needed physical, oral, and mental health care” according to Dr. Maxine Hayes, Washington State Health Officer. In Washington State, more than one out of three adolescents (8th, 10th, and 12th grades) reported in the 2006 Healthy Youth Survey that they have not seen a physician or health care provider in the last year for preventive care.

The school-based health center model is nationally recognized as one of the best ways to provide effective, efficient, and appropriate health care services to adolescents. The centers target adolescents who are uninsured and underinsured -- those who have nowhere else to go to get medical care and counseling. They also serve students with insurance who are more comfortable receiving services in their own school.

Across the country, over 1600 School Based Health Centers (SBHC) have excelled at targeting this need by providing developmentally appropriate, patient driven care for youth within their school building. SBHCs utilize a multidisciplinary team to blend medical care with preventive and mental health services and often organize broader school-based and community-based health promotion efforts. The clinical services within the health center are provided through a qualified health provider such as a hospital, health department, or medical practice.

There are 17 SBHCs in Washington State; 16 are in King County and one in Kitsap County. Last year, over 5000 students were enrolled in these school based health centers. Students themselves reported that getting health services at school helped them to be more attentive in class.

The new planning grantees are varied and include school districts, health organizations, a local health jurisdiction and a community organization. The planning grant awards are up to \$20,000 for 6 months. Some are directed at developing a school based health center in a high school or middle school and some are planning for multiple schools. Most of the targeted schools are low income, rural, and have below state average WASL scores. All of the communities have developed strong local planning partnerships that include school administrators, school nurses, health care providers, local health jurisdictions, parents and businesses. “There are too many barriers preventing youth from accessing needed preventive and clinical services” said Dr Hayes, “and it is exciting and an important development that all of these communities recognize the value of providing health services for youth in their school.”

Group Health Foundation has provided a grant to the Washington State Department of Health that will fund 5 of the 11 community planning grants. Technical assistance will be provided to all of the grantees from Public Health Seattle-King County and Kitsap County Health District with funding from the Mental Health Transformation Grant. In addition to the Department of Health, the Group Health Foundation, Public Health

Seattle-King County, and the Mental Health Transformation Grant, other partners in this planning effort to expand the number of school based health centers across Washington State include the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Social and Health Services Medicaid Administration, the School Nurse Corps, and education service districts.

The eleven selected school based health center planning grantees and their proposed service areas are:

- Bridgeport School District to serve students in Okanogan and Douglas counties;
- Omak School District to serve students from Omak and Brewster School District;
- Puget Sound Neighborhood Health Centers to serve students in Mercer Middle School in Seattle;
- Virginia Mason Medical Center to serve students in Bainbridge High School;
- South Kitsap School District to serve students in Discovery Alternative High School;
- Snoqualmie Valley Community Network to serve students in the Snoqualmie Valley School District;
- Dayton School District to serve students in Columbia County's Dayton Middle/High School;
- Walla Walla School District to serve students in Lincoln Alternative High School and Walla Walla High School;
- Community Health Centers of King County to serve students in a Tukwila high school or middle school;
- North Kitsap School District to serve students in North Kitsap High School; and,
- Jefferson County Public Health to serve students in Port Townsend High School, Port Townsend Middle School and Chimacum High School.

The planning grants will allow the 11 individual communities to tailor their school based health center to the unique needs of the youth in their schools.

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