

PRESS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

School-Based Health Centers Impacting the Lives of Children

(Omaha, Neb., May 9, 2011) Building Bright Futures (BBF) and the Omaha Public Schools (OPS) are making a difference in the health of our community's children. May 2011 marks the first year of operation of the six School-Based Health Centers (SBHC) that serve students at King Science & Technology Magnet Center, Spring Lake Elementary, Indian Hill Elementary, Belvedere Elementary, Kellom Elementary and Liberty Elementary.

In an attempt to address health disparities and improve the health of the whole child, Omaha Public Schools and Building Bright Futures combined efforts to develop a plan that would provide quality health care for Omaha area students. The planning resulted in the implementation of School-Based Health Centers (SBHC), which are on-site health centers that promote the health and educational success of school-aged children. Through the SBHCs, BBF and OPS are reaching students in the Omaha area who might not otherwise have access to quality health care, a medical home or primary care provider or are uninsured.

"The collaborative effort of our community's health care providers, lead by Children's Hospital and Medical Center, made the School-Based Health Centers possible," said BBF Executive Director, John Cavanaugh, "and it's very rewarding to see all six sites flourish after only 10 months of operation. The Omaha community has stepped up and made it possible for our poorest families to have access to health care."

With a targeted population of low income students in the Omaha Public Schools and their siblings, the School-Based Health Centers are on-track to exceed the projected number of youth served.

- 1,705 students were served from across the Omaha community as of April 1, 2011 in SBHCs
- 47 percent of those served were ages 5-9 years of age
- 78 percent served were from birth to 12 years of age

Most common conditions seen in the SBHCs include: health maintenance visits, colds/cough, sore throats and asthma. These common health conditions and illnesses are responsible for keeping children out of classrooms and potentially, preventing them from learning. By providing on-site medical care, the illness can be addressed and treated in a timely manner, allowing the child to return to the classroom.

"The impact is that we have created a new pathway for children in need to enter into health care," said Deb Tomek, M.D., SBHC Medical Director. "By providing quality health care within areas of Omaha with high poverty and with a low number of medical providers, we have greatly reduced many of the barriers that children and families often experience such as transportation, affordability, access to health insurance and language."

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The SBHCs are staffed and operated by Charles Drew Health Center and OneWorld Community Health Center. “It is comforting to know that in the fall, children will have no delay in starting school on time because immunizations are available at the School-Based Health Centers,” said Richard Brown, Ph.D., CEO, Charles Drew Health Center.

“School-Based Health Centers are key to the good health of children and provide primary and preventive services which are essential in health care system of the future,” said Andrea Skolkin, CEO, OneWorld Community Health Center.

According to Spring Lake Magnet Center Principal, Susan Aguilera-Robles, the SBHC at her school has eased the worries of parents regarding health care for their children. “Our parents know that if their children are sick at school, they can be seen that day by a health provider,” she said.

Twenty-six percent of students who are being served by the SBHCs report that they do not have a previous connection to a medical home or a primary care provider. When utilizing the SBHCs, staff help connect children and families with a health care provider and medical home.

“Students are seen for preventative and acute illnesses on a daily basis and the expert care our students receive allows them to stay in the classroom, which prevents unnecessary absences,” said Belvedere Elementary School Principal, Melissa Comine. “Parents report that they are appreciative of the high quality care and convenience.”

The creation of the health centers was a collaborative effort of the Omaha Public Schools, Children’s Hospital and Medical Center, University of Nebraska Medical Center, Creighton University Medical Center, Boys Town National Research Hospital, Charles Drew Community Health Center, OneWorld Community Health Center, Alegent Health Systems and Nebraska Methodist Health Systems.

For more information about School-Based Health Centers, visit www.ops.org/sbhc or www.buildingbrightfutures.net.

Building Bright Futures is a 501©(3) organization created in 2006 by a group of business, civic and political leaders who came together to assess the status of the youth in Douglas and Sarpy County. The BBF mission is to improve academic performance, raise graduation rates, increase civic and community responsibility and ensure that all students are prepared for post-secondary education by developing partnerships with existing providers and creating new evidence-based programs to develop a comprehensive, community-based network of services.