

# WHY care?

ILLINOIS COALITION FOR SCHOOL HEALTH CENTERS

A project of the Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition







# because

almost half of all children in the United States do not have on-going quality health care from a regular medical provider.

Nearly 40% of Illinois children did not visit a doctor in the past year and almost 60% did not have their annual check-up. In addition, 38% had no regular facility to visit for medical care. Almost 40% of the counties in Illinois have no pediatricians, psychologists or psychiatrists, and 82% of counties have no pediatric dentist. Current unmet children's health care needs translate to more serious health problems and increased costs in the future.

# because

more than 20% of children living in the United States have a diagnosable mental health problem, yet only one in five of these children receive services.

Nearly one-third of young children are perceived as not ready to succeed in school, with many affected by social and emotional issues. Nearly one-quarter of Illinois adolescents and one-third of Chicago adolescents self-reported signs of depression for two or more weeks in a row. Untreated mental health problems impact students' ability to learn and increase their propensity for violence, alcohol and substance abuse and other risky behaviors that are costly to treat.

*Illinois Children's Mental Health Task Force 2003*

*Illinois Kids Count 2007*





# because

nearly one in five of all children and teens in the United States are overweight.

Nationwide, the number of overweight young people has more than tripled since 1980. One-third of low-income youth are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight, compared with one-fifth of youth in higher-income families. Close to 40% of Illinois third graders are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight. Overweight and obese children are at higher risk for chronic illnesses such as heart disease, type II diabetes, cancer and asthma.

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
2003 CLOCC Annual Report  
Illinois Kids Count 2007*

# because

children and adolescents have the right to quality, accessible, confidential, culturally competent, comprehensive health services.

The school setting is a sensible place to deliver care. School health centers offer services that positively impact health risks such as poor diets, substance abuse, emotional problems and physical illness. School health centers bring health care to schools in order to enhance students' success.

*The National Assembly on School-Based Health Care*





The Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers strives to improve the physical and mental health of children and adolescents in Illinois by fostering the development, stabilization and expansion of school health centers.



The Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers represents institutions and individuals who support, receive and provide health care in schools and school-linked programs.

We provide leadership, resources, training and technical assistance to enable school health centers to deliver high quality services, become financially stable and play an active role in public policy.



We advocate for local, state and national polices and funding to integrate school health centers into health care and education systems.

Under the Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers' leadership, the school health center model has expanded across Illinois helping to keep students healthy and ready to learn.

# access

School health centers improve students' access to quality health care services. Students can receive medical, mental health, dental and health education services on-site without leaving school property, or for school-linked health centers, receive these services in close proximity of the school. School health centers bring health care to schools in order to help students succeed.

*“At first I didn’t get it. Where would they put a school health center in a school? How does it work? But it’s just like a doctor’s office. It’s more comfortable. You can walk in and be in a teen-friendly atmosphere.”*

—Cleotilde Hough, student at Amundsen High School, Chicago



In Illinois, school health centers are:

- Located where children and youth spend most of their time
- Provide services when school is open
- Facilitate after-hours care
- Serve students regardless of their ability to pay
- Require parental consent for students to receive most services
- Provide referrals to specialty care or other resources located in the community
- Are a state-certified model of care and staffed by a team of qualified providers (doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, social workers, psychologists and health educators)

# support



School health centers are planned partnerships among schools, communities, providers, parents and students. Partners engage in continuous dialogue to meet the health needs of the community's children and adolescents.

## School health centers support the **student**.

- Provide medical, mental health, dental and health education services
- Provide confidential, culturally sensitive and youth friendly services
- Promote healthy decision-making
- Help students stay in school

## School health centers support the **parent**.

- Provide services their children need such as mental health, health education and treatment for acute and chronic diseases
- Reduce lost work time
- Promote parental engagement in health care
- Provide family assistance for benefits enrollment and other supportive services such as state health insurance programs, food stamps and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

“Using the school wellness center has been a life changing experience for my family. In a community with limited providers, the school-based facility enables students and faculty to see a health care provider and never leave the building.”

—Lori Downen, parent from Gallatin County

## School health centers support the **school**.

- Integrate health and education to address barriers to learning and promote academic success
- Collaborate with school personnel to ensure that students are healthy and ready to learn
- Participate in the school’s crisis intervention team to provide assistance in times of school crises and community disasters
- Promote healthy behaviors throughout the school

## School health centers support the **community**.

- Link students and families to community resources
- Engage the community in health promotion activities
- Respect family values and diversity within the community
- Involve the community in improving the health of the students and families

# impact

National and local evaluations reveal numerous health benefits of school health centers. Research and evaluations demonstrate that school health centers represent cost-effective investments of public resources.

“Our school health center helps to increase the attendance rate at our school, as well as works with parents, students and staff to increase healthy living.”

—Alfonso Carrington, principal at Bond Elementary School, Chicago



## School health centers **promote student well-being and academic success.**

- Increase preventive health care for students with the highest need
- Reduce risky behaviors that compromise health and educational success
- Decrease school absenteeism associated with chronic disease or acute illness
- Decrease school exclusion by providing state mandated school physicals and immunizations
- Improve access to mental health and substance abuse services
- Reduce health care access disparities for low-income and minority children and adolescents
- Strengthen community services to serve young people more efficiently and effectively

## School health centers **save money.**

- Reduce emergency room visits
- Decrease hospitalizations for asthma and other chronic conditions
- Prevent disease by providing immunizations to students
- Decrease parents' lost wages



## The Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers

acknowledges the ongoing support of the Illinois Department of Human Services in the development, funding and oversight of school health centers statewide. In addition, the following organizations are recognized for their generous support:

Chicago Community Trust

Lloyd A. Fry Foundation

Michael Reese Health Trust

Polk Bros. Foundation

Prince Charitable Trust

University of Illinois at Chicago, Neighborhoods Initiative

VNA Foundation



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