



School Health Centers: Is Anyone Better Off?

Alameda County
Center for Healthy Schools and Communities



Acknowledgments

This report was produced by the Alameda County Center for Healthy Schools and Communities. The Center works to improve the health and education outcomes of Alameda County youth by building school-based and school-linked health and wellness programs. Our work extends beyond simply placing health services on school sites; it is rooted in purposeful, responsive collaborations with youth, families, schools, and surrounding institutions.

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CENTER
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SCHOOLS AND
COMMUNITIES
ALAMEDA COUNTY HEALTH CARE SERVICES

This brief was produced by the Center for Healthy Schools and Communities in partnership with the School Health Services Research and Evaluation Team from the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). The UCSF Team has evaluated Alameda County School Health Centers since 1998. For more information: healthpolicy.ucsf.edu/school-health-services-evaluation.

In order to thrive, young people need positive supports and opportunities that promote their health, well-being and personal growth. The Alameda County Center for Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) and its 27 partner School Health Centers are working to link health, education, and communities to change lives and achieve equity through the provision of school-based and school-linked health services.

For over 20 years, CHSC has invested in School Health Centers as a strategy to improve health equity by increasing young people's access to health care. The CHSC School Health Centers Evaluation uses Results Based Accountability (RBA) to track performance measures and population indicators that answer: *How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off?* This brief provides evidence that School Health Centers increase access to health care and preventive services, and improve students' behavioral health outcomes, and academic success.

Impact: Universal Access to Health Care

SERVING STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Over the past decade, the number of School Health Centers increased from ten to 27, the number of clients increased to 14,446 (a 151% increase), and the number of annual visits increased to 60,780 (a 190% increase). In 2014, there were nearly 35,000 students in Alameda County with access to a School Health Center on or near their school campus. Moreover, 20% of Alameda County School Health Center clients were from the broader community, e.g. family members, graduates, and neighborhood residents.

School Health Center Clients 2014–15



Increase in Clients



Increase in Visits

2004:
n=20,975



2014:
n=60,780

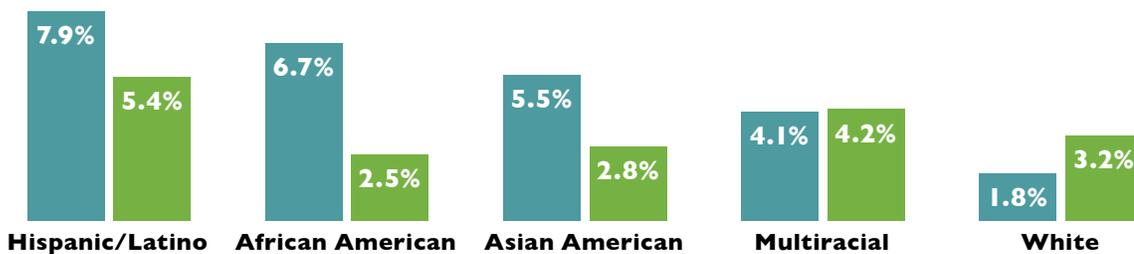


INCREASING INSURANCE COVERAGE

Over the past five years, there has been a decline in the percent of youth countywide without health insurance coverage. The largest declines were seen among youth of color, as shown below.

Estimated percentage of Alameda County children under age 18 without health insurance coverage, by race/ethnicity.

● 2009 ● 2014



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (Sept. 2015).

School Health Centers contributed in part to the declines by providing over 4,000 families with information about health insurance and benefits eligibility or referred them to an off-site location for application assistance; 545 families received application assistance on-site at the School Health Centers.

OFFERING INTEGRATED SERVICES AND ACHIEVING HIGH CLIENT SATISFACTION

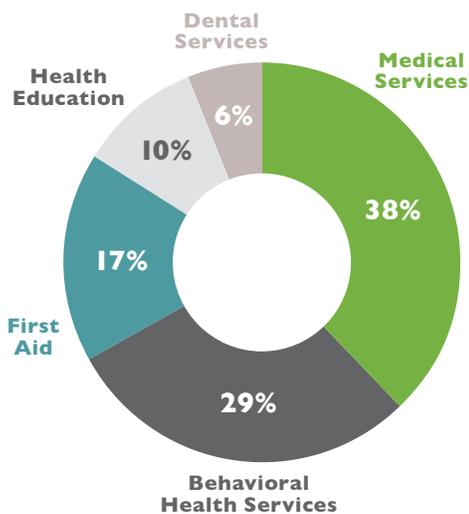
The School Health Center model approaches young people holistically, offering integrated health and wellness services. Most visits in 2014-15 were for medical (38%), individual or group behavioral health (29%), first aid (17%), health education (10%) and dental services (6%). They also provided non-clinical services, including youth development and leadership programs.

Nearly all clients (98%) reported in satisfaction surveys that they liked having the School Health Center at their schools, were welcomed and greeted warmly when they visited, felt like it was a safe place, would recommend it to their friends, and felt that the people who work there were easy to talk to. Nearly all clients agreed that the School Health Center helped them get needed information and resources (97%), access services they wouldn't otherwise get (95%), and receive help sooner than they normally would (95%). In addition, 96% reported that it was easy to see someone when needed.



They believed in me when no one else did."

Reason for School Health Center Visit



Percentage of Clients Agree the School Health Center...

Helped them get needed resources and information: **97%**

Reported it was easy to see someone when needed: **96%**

Helped them get service they wouldn't otherwise get: **95%**

Helped them receive assistance sooner than normal: **95%**



REACHING STUDENTS MOST IN NEED

Clients who used the School Health Centers frequently (>10 times a year) were more likely than non-users in the same schools to live in situations other than with a parent/guardian, receive grades of mostly Cs or lower in school, skip school or cut classes more frequently, have been victimized or harassed at school, be sexually active, and to have seriously considered attempting suicide. Given the high needs of these youth, it is encouraging that they are receiving much needed services from the School Health Centers. In fact, these high frequency users were also significantly more likely to report “always” getting mental health care when needed compared to their peers (42% high-users vs. 26% non-users, $p < 0.001$), as well as reproductive health care (59% high-users vs. 25% non-users, $p < 0.001$).³



Impact: Improved Behavioral Health

School Health Centers provide essential services across all three tiers of CHSC’s School-Based Behavioral Health model.⁴ **Tier 1** universal prevention/school-wide supports included health education, school health fairs or outreach events to raise awareness of behavioral health issues and School and Health Center services. **Tier 2** early and targeted group interventions focused on self-esteem and empowerment, restorative justice, social skills, conflict resolution, crisis intervention and grief support. In addition, School Health Center staff provided teacher consultations regarding specific students. Nearly one-quarter (23%) of School Health Center medical and health education visits included psychosocial screenings to identify youth in need of additional support or referrals. School Health Centers provided 2,833 clients with 17,350 individual and group behavioral health visits, including **Tier 3** individualized/intensive interventions.

As a result of these services, clients reported a variety of positive behavioral health related outcomes, as seen in the table below.

The School Health Center helped me to... (2014-15 Client Survey, n=678-1,073)	% Agree or Strongly Agree
Feel like I had an adult I could turn to if I needed help or support.	97%
Feel safe talking about my problems.	96%
Feel more confident.	96%
Deal with stress/anxiety better.	93%
Treat people better (like less name calling or teasing).	92%
Deal with personal or family issues.	91%
Stop using or use less tobacco, alcohol or drugs.	89%
Avoid getting into fights.	89%

Impact: Enhancing Academic Success

SUPPORTING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Studies have documented that healthy students have improved academic outcomes⁵. School Health Centers are designed to provide health and wellness services to support the school population and help eliminate barriers to academic success.

Nearly all satisfaction survey respondents reported that the School Health Center helped them learn skills that will help them in the future (95%), stay in school (94%), have goals and plans for the future (94%), do better in school (93%), have a stronger college application (92%), feel more connected to people at school (91%), make school a better place (91%), and have better attendance (90%).

IMPROVING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Studies have documented a significantly positive impact from the presence of a School Health Center on the school learning environment.^{6,7,8,9} In a large school-wide survey of three school districts, School Health Center users in Alameda County reported higher levels of school assets than non-users (34% vs. 27%, $p < .001$), including relationships with and high expectations from caring adults and meaningful opportunities for participation.

KEEPING STUDENTS IN SCHOOL

Studies have also shown a positive relationship between School Health Centers and reduction in student absences or days tardy.^{10,11,12} In Alameda County School Health Centers, the vast majority of clients were sent back to class (85%) rather than sent home after medical visits. With an estimated Average Daily Attendance (ADA) payment of \$56/day, this saved school districts nearly \$1 million (\$939,848) in ADA in 2014-15.

REDUCING SUSPENSION AND INCREASING GRADUATION RATES

School Health Centers in Alameda County are more likely to be placed in lower performing schools, including those with high suspension and low graduation rates.

As the table shows, suspension rates declined from 2010-11 to 2014-15 by 66% statewide, countywide and in Alameda County schools with School Health Centers. Moreover, graduation rates increased in each of these populations, and by the largest percent among Alameda County School Health Center schools. Although these positive changes cannot be directly attributed to School Health Centers, the data provide evidence that they are working to “turn the curve” and contributing to these positive population-level academic outcomes, especially in schools that have historically been underperforming and serving large numbers of underserved students.



They helped me be comfortable with who I am and be comfortable to talk if I felt something was wrong.”

	Suspension Rates			Graduation Rates		
	2010-11	2014-15	% change	2010-11	2014-15	% change
California	11.3	3.8	-66%	77.1	82.3	+7%
Alameda County	9.6	3.3	-66%	78.0	85.0	+9%
Alameda County School Health Center schools	18.4	6.3	-66%	72.3	79.5	+10%



The School Health Center has made me feel like I always have someone there if I need them. Amazing staff.”

Conclusions

School Health Centers in Alameda County are making a difference for youth. The evaluation data highlighted in this brief demonstrate that they have helped increase access to health care and preventive services, and improve students’ behavioral health outcomes, and academic success. School Health Centers address student emotional and physical health needs that can make concentrating in class and even staying in school difficult. They play a vital role in supporting students’ healthy development and academic success by providing a safe environment with caring adults; access to confidential, developmentally appropriate health services; and opportunities for participation in authentic leadership and skill-building experiences.

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