

# La Opinión

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## The trend is clinics in schools

Los Angeles County has 50 medical centers already operating in schools

By Yurina Rico

Would you like to have a medical clinic as accessible as the school where your children attend? If this seems like a good idea, officials in the county of Los Angeles and some other counties such as San Francisco and San Diego, also agree that this is a good plan.

Today in California, there are 153 medical centers operating in campuses of primary and secondary schools. In Los Angeles there are 50 centers, 28 of these schools are located in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).

Serena Clayton, director of the California School Health Centers Association, explained that the main objective of these centers is to allow for minors to receive the health care they need without having to miss classes, and that centers also serve the community.

“Everyone knows how to get to school, and it is a place where they feel comfortable, safe and already familiar,” said Clayton. “What we’re looking to do now is to expand to different schools and different communities.”

Health centers in schools operate with mixed funds, such as money from the county, state, private foundations and, in some cases, if the student has Medi-Cal, they also receive funds from the federal government.

Sandra Jones, director of the medical clinic at Jordan High School, explained that the clinic offers different services ranging from immunizations and physicals to mental health consultations.

The medical center at Jordan High School is one of the first opened by the County of Los Angeles in schools in 1987. The clinic provides mental health services for seven primary, two intermediate schools and an adult school in the area.

The advantage of having a medical center in school is that the student does not lose a day of class and can go either on their lunch hour, during the recess or be referred by a teacher or the school nurse, said Jones.

The services currently offered are: family planning, immunizations, physical examinations and counseling. Unlike the Jordan High School health clinic, the Middle School health clinic that recently opened in the San Fernando Valley, which is operated by Northeast Valley Health Corporation, serves not only students but also people from the community.

That clinic, called the Sun Valley Health Center, has an architectural design that allows access from both the school and from the street.

Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, who not only supported this project with \$7.2 million, but also secured funding from private companies, is one of the officials in Los Angeles County who is driving this type of center.

Yaroslavsky noted that in the area where the clinic is located, one in three people do not have health insurance and the average income is 200% below the federal poverty level. And that is precisely the approach that Los Angeles officials are using to open other clinics in schools.

According to Bonnie Greene, LAUSD’s nursing counselor, the school district has identified areas of the south and east of Los Angeles as a “key points,” places with a lot of people who would benefit from the clinics.

“What we possibly see in the future will be that more money and more resources will be channeled to these projects,” said Greene, who without going into details because of the complexity of the issue, said LAUSD is negotiating with community clinics and foundations to open clinics in schools in areas identified as “key points.”

“We need to replicate the model of medical care in all areas,” said Greene.

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*NOTE: This article originally appeared in Spanish in La Opinión. This translated version is provided by the California School Health Centers Association. The name of the Jordan High School clinic director is Sandra Jones and appeared in the original article incorrectly as Sandra Johns.*