



School Health Centers

## School health centers put health care where kids are.

Supporting school health centers throughout California promotes the health and academic success of children and youth.

**Many children come to school everyday suffering from conditions that seriously impact their ability to learn and to succeed.**

**Chronic Disease.** In 2003, 14.8% of children had been diagnosed with asthma at some point in their lives.<sup>2</sup> Asthma is the reason for 1 in 6 pediatric visits in the U.S.,<sup>3</sup> 14 million missed school days,<sup>4</sup> and the third-ranking cause of hospitalizations for kids under 15.<sup>5</sup>

**Childhood Obesity** puts children at risk for physical and emotional problems and threatens to reduce life expectancy for the first time in modern history.<sup>6</sup> Across the nation, the percentage of overweight children has tripled in the last three decades.<sup>7</sup> Over 70% of 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> graders do not meet CA state standards for all-around physical fitness.<sup>8</sup>

**Reproductive Health Issues.** In 2001, more than 53,000 teens—nearly 5% of all teens—gave birth in California,<sup>9</sup> with 70% of teen mothers dropping out of high school.<sup>10</sup>

**Dental Health Issues** contribute to low self esteem, difficulty eating and speaking and result in an estimated 2 million missed school days per year nation wide. Yet 23% of children do not have insurance for dental services<sup>11</sup>

**School health centers offer services in a location that is familiar, trusted, and convenient for students and families – the school.**

### **SCHOOL HEALTH CENTERS WORK because they:**

- Put health care where the kids are.
- Tailor services to fit the community reflecting language and cultural diversity.
- Are popular with parents for their convenience.
- Bring health care professionals and educators together to do what works for kids.
- Address health needs in order to enable teachers to teach and students to learn.

### **SCHOOL HEALTH CENTERS provide *primary care* like any doctor's office or health clinic.**

- Health centers are usually located directly on school campus.
- Staff includes nurse practitioners, nurses, mental health care providers as well as part-time physicians and medical students in training.
- Services include: direct primary care, mental health care, reproductive care and dental health care, all at no or low cost.
- School health centers are run by many different types of organizations including school districts, federally qualified and community health centers, hospitals, county health departments, and nonprofit organizations.

### **SCHOOL HEALTH CENTERS expand access to health care without increasing costs.**

- Research shows that investments in school health centers yield comparable savings through reduced use of high cost services, thereby increasing access without increasing overall Medicaid expenditures.<sup>12</sup>
- Studies have found that school health centers reduce inappropriate emergency room use,<sup>13,14</sup> inpatient, drug and emergency department use,<sup>15</sup> and hospitalization among children with asthma.<sup>16,17</sup>

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