Innovation Report

Washington Association for Community Health
Community Health Centers Advancing Quality Care for All

CHC Community Health Center of Snohomish County

Ensuring Vaccine Access at School-Based Health Centers



Right from the start, Community Health Center of Snohomish County's (CHC) school-based health centers were rooted in a strong partnership with the Edmonds School District. This collaboration emerged in response to challenges families faced in meeting Washington State's vaccination requirements. Those challenges could result in missed school or disruptions in learning. The school district understood that bringing vaccine and health services to their students was more efficient and effective than hoping students and their families would have the resources to seek health services on their own.

When a pertussis ("whooping cough") outbreak hit Snohomish County in the spring of 2024 and a local student became ill, the school nurse at Mountlake Terrace High School reached out to CHC's school-based staff, hoping to coordinate the Tdap vaccination for students. It might sound easy, but to ensure informed consent according to Washington State law was met, CHC school-based staff engaged with each student and their families before giving each shot. This partnership ensured that all students got the right care at the right time and place.

Through this joint effort, they were able to reach 100% vaccination status for the school's students experiencing homelessness and provided vaccines to all interested students.

CHC school-based staff report that Mountlake Terrace High School's exclusion rate has been under 10 students (out of a student population of about 1,460). This is an important outcome not only for students but for schools.

CHC school-based staff also note that offering vaccinations provides an entry point for students to access other primary care services at the school-based health center, like mental, behavioral, and social-emotional health services.

Benefits of a school-based health center:

- Students miss less school because they can access services where they are
- Parents/Guardians miss less work which positively impacts their socioeconomic status
- Students can explore careers healthcare through internships & other training programs

To learn more about CHC's school-based health centers, read the full report.

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