School-Based Health Centers and Academic Success

Poor academic outcomes and high dropout rates are major concerns of educators, policy makers, and parents alike—and poor health severely limits a child’s motivation and ability to learn. Recent research confirms that health disparities affect educational achievement (1). Improving students’ health is integral to education reform.

Why School-Based Health Centers?

School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs)—the convergence of public health, primary care, and mental health—provide an optimal setting to foster learning readiness and academic achievement while giving children the resources they need to improve their health.

The Facts:

- High school SBHC users in one 2000 study had a 50% decrease in absenteeism and 25% decrease in tardiness two months after receiving school-based mental health and counseling (2).
- A study of SBHC users in Seattle found that those who use the clinic for medical purposes had a significant increase in attendance over nonusers (3).
- African-American male SBHC users were three times more likely to stay in school than their peers who did not use the SBHC (4).
- Students, teachers, and parents who have a SBHC rated academic expectations, school engagement, and safety and respect significantly higher than in schools without a SBHC (5).
- SBHCs in The Bronx, NY reduced hospitalization and increased school attendance among school children with asthma (6).
- A quasi-experimental study in New York observed that students not enrolled in a SBHC lost three times as much seat time as students enrolled in a SBHC (7).