

News Release
For Immediate Release

Media contact: Lindsay Keller
lkeller@metgroup.com
202-380-3116 (work); 571-275-0994 (cell)

Capitol Hill Briefing Explains School-Based Health Centers' Roles as First Responders to Students in Crisis

National Assembly on School-Based Health Care Introduces the School-Based Health Clinic Establishment Act and Shares Data that Show Voter Support of Centers

JAN. 31, 2007 – WASHINGTON, D.C. – Health and education policy leaders believe that school-based health centers play a significant role in responding to students in crisis and provide a national model of health care access for students. Buoyed by a Lake Research Partners study that shows two-thirds of American voters support school-based health centers—essentially doctors offices within schools—members of National Assembly on School-Based Health Care met today with congressional staff at a special briefing to explain the role of school-based health care and discuss new legislation that would expand the federal health care safety net to include school health centers. Nationwide, there are approximately 1,700 school-based health centers available to serve nearly 2 million children in 44 states.

“School-based health centers were born of a movement to bridge health and education with the explicit objective of keeping school-aged children and youth healthy so that they experience the fewest possible barriers to learning,” said John Schlitt, executive director of the National Assembly on School-Based Health Care. “In a time of crisis, school-based health centers take their work a step further to respond to individual, school and community needs.”

“Whether it’s an extremely public crisis etched in our collective consciousness with grim detail, or the silent crisis of anxiety and depression among our youth, school-based health centers provide some of the basic tools to ensure student success by keeping young people strong, healthy and able to learn,” added Schlitt.

In addition to Schlitt, other experts who presented their views on school-based health care included Dr. David Satcher, director of the Center of Excellence on Health Disparities and 16th Surgeon General of the United States, who discussed the role of schools in creating access to mental health services; Charles Peters, executive director, Louisiana Assembly on School-Based Health Care, who explained how school-based health centers provided swift response to Hurricane Katrina evacuees and continue to offer mental health services such as grief counseling; and Army Master Sgt. Scott P. Dugan, recently returned from his second deployment to Iraq, whose family relied on a Watertown, New York, school-based health center to help them through a time of personal crisis.

Research Shows Voter Support

Research led by Lake Research Partners and funded by W.K. Kellogg Foundation shows that two-thirds of American voters support school-based health centers. Additionally, voters are surprised to learn that school-based health centers do not have a steady source of funding, and most agree that the federal government should fund such health centers.

“Voters across the country see school-based health centers as an important way to provide a service to children who otherwise might not have access to care or who might not seek care,” said Alysia Snell, partner of Lake Research Partners. “Furthermore, the level of support for providing health care in schools crosses demographic boundaries, including regional, party and racial lines, pointing to voters’ belief that schools are a well-chosen venue for bringing health care to children.”

more -

The research, originally conducted in July 2006, was updated in January, following the November election results. “The more recent polling continues to show the importance voters place on the issue of school-based health centers and that despite the other issues facing America today, voters show support around government funding of these centers,” continued Snell.

- The National Assembly on School-Based Health Care 2004–2005 Census shows that the services provided at school health centers mesh with what voters want. **Voters believe that school-based health centers should provide a wide range of services, from mental health to helping prevent and treat chronic illnesses such as diabetes and asthma.** Specific services voters want these centers to offer include:
 - mental health services such as grief therapy, help with peer pressure and bullying, and suicide prevention (8 out of 10 centers provide these services, according to NASBHC 2004-2005 census data);
 - health education on eating right and exercising, and counseling for children with obesity or other eating problems (89 percent of centers provide these services, according to NASBHC 2004-2005 census data);
 - treatment of acute illness or sudden trauma (94 percent of centers provide these services, according to NASBHC 2004-2005 census data); and
 - diagnosis and treatment of chronic illnesses like asthma (92 percent of centers provide asthma health services, according to NASBHC 2004-2005 census data).

Currently, only 36 percent of school-based health centers report receiving any grant funding from the federal government, according to the National Assembly’s 2004-2005 census. Yet voters look to the government, at both the federal and state levels, to set aside specific funds for the centers.

About the Legislation

The School-Based Health Clinic Establishment Act, an amendment of the Public Health Service Act, creates a school-based health clinic program within the federal government. The Act, sponsored by Senators Gordon Smith (R-OR), Christopher Dodd (D-CT), Jeff Bingaman, (D-NM), Susan Collins, (R-ME), Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Olympia Snowe (R-ME) and David Vitter (R-LA), will be presented in the Senate in February.

About School-Based Health Centers

School-based health centers do four important things:

- With parents’ permission, the centers provide basic quality health care services such as shots, asthma and diabetes management, nutrition advice, and mental health services such as grief therapy, help with peer pressure and bullying, and suicide prevention.
- They ensure that students who don’t get medical treatment anywhere else get it at school.
- They give students medical attention when they need it, catching problems like asthma and diabetes now, preventing bigger problems later.
- Most importantly, they keep students healthy and in class so they can learn what they need to know to succeed in life.

For information about the National Assembly, school-based health centers, the School-Based Health Clinic Establishment Act, or the Lake Research Partners polling data results, please visit www.nasbhc.org.

The National Assembly on School-Based Health Care is an advocacy organization that is the voice for those who work in, are served by, and support an important model of health care that delivers services where children and adolescents learn and grow - at their schools.

###