

Middletown trying for second school-based health clinic

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MIDDLETOWN — The city already has one of fewer than 30 school-based health clinics in Connecticut — and now it wants a second site.

Will the state want to spread its dollars to new districts or stick with a system that's shown success?

Neither, a state health department official said this week.

"You don't get extra points for having one in your community [al-

ready], and you don't lose points," said Lynn Noyes, supervisor of school and adolescent health. "Everybody's equally eligible across the board."

On the other hand, Noyes and local officials agree, the city can boast an intangible edge: experience.

Organizers went through the award process once, with Macdonough elementary school, they said, and so they know what's needed to win grant money for a new middle school program.

"We have a demonstrated track record of being able to get a center funded and being able to get it up and running," said Margaret Flinter, vice president of the Community Health Center in the city.

The center is the lead agency operating Macdonough's clinic, and would also run a middle school model if the system wins state funding. The Macdonough clinic got its grant in 1992, and opened in spring 1993 with a combination of medical, mental health and outreach services.

This spring, the state legislature allotted more than \$1 million to open 10 to 15 new health clinics in 1994-95. Flinter said this week that she received the state application earlier this month; it is due back to the state by Sept. 30.

Local officials have said they want to offer a range of services similar to those at Macdonough for city students in grades 6, 7 and 8; the board of education in June unanimously supported the concept of a second clinic.

The clinic — expected to operate

both at Keigwin Annex and Woodrow Wilson Middle schools — would not offer contraception, contraception counseling, or abortion counseling, school officials assured the board before its vote.

School officials already have collected much of the information needed for the proposal, Flinter said; next month the advisory committee for Macdonough's clinic will be asked to participate in developing this second application.

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Applications will earn points in three major categories, Noyes said: demonstrated need, program plans and evaluation plans. Wilson Principal Frank Balisciano acknowledged the system does not face as many demands as more urban systems, but said he still believes his students have needs.

For example, a survey conducted during the last school year found

that one of every five eighth-graders reported having been drunk within the previous two weeks; more than one of every three reported feeling life is sometimes not worth living.

"We certainly qualify," Balisciano said.

An independent panel will review and rank proposals before making recommendations to the department's commissioner of health services. Awards are expected to be announced at the end of October,

Noyes said. Winners will be expected to have clinics operating by the end of February 1995.

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