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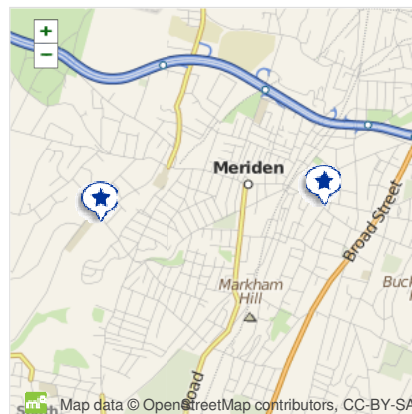
Platt May Get Walk-In Clinic

Board of Education to hear proposal about in-school health centers at its Jan. 4 meeting

By **Laurie Rich Salerno** December 24, 2010

The Board of Education is considering a pilot program that would put a walk-in health clinic for students into Platt High School. If it proves successful, similar clinics could go into schools throughout the district.

The Connecticut non-profit medical provider Community Health Center is slated to give a presentation to the BOE at its Jan. 4 meeting, outlining a proposal to place one of its school-based health centers in the district. The center already provides behavioral health services like individual and family therapy in all 12 Meriden public schools for 1,876 students.



If approval is granted quickly by the board, the clinic could open its doors at Platt before the end of the 2011 spring semester, according to Jane Hylan, the Director of School-Based Health Services at the center.

The clinic, several of which are already in various schools in Middletown, New Britain, New London, and Stamford, would be staffed by a medical assistant and a nurse practitioner who would be able to diagnose illnesses, prescribe medication, provide physicals for sports and school entry, immunize children, and help monitor chronic conditions like asthma.

"The whole idea is that we want to keep the students in school, instead of going to the nurse's office and being sent home," said BOE Member Steven O'Donnell, who brought the idea to the board at its Dec. 21 meeting.

According to Hylan, more than 90 percent of kids go back to class after visiting the current school-based clinics. In addition to helping keep students in school, "(the center) keeps parents who are trying to juggle two jobs from having to leave work to run kids around."

Parents would have to sign up before their children could receive services. Most schools that currently have clinics have a 50-60 percent enrollment, Hylan said. Services are billed to HUSKY, the state-administered insurance option for children up to 19 years old. Uninsured students receive free care. Right now, clinic services are not covered by private insurers.

The clinic wouldn't cost the district anything, barring in-kind costs of cleaning the space, heating and electricity, according to Hylan. If the pilot is approved, Community Health Center would perform light renovations to a portion of the nurse's office Platt. The school nurse's role would still exist, both in triaging enrolled students for the clinic and in treating students not enrolled.

The clinic's service parameters would be controlled by the BOE, so providing contraception and other types of sensitive services would be up to board discretion. None of the current health centers provide contraceptive services, Hylan said.

Platt was chosen over Maloney High School for the pilot because its nurse's office is already somewhat configured for clinic use. If the Platt clinic is considered a success, Hylan said Maloney would likely be the next site. O'Donnell said he could see having clinics in every district school if the pilot worked out and space was available.

The Community Health Center has been providing school-based health services in Connecticut for approximately the last 20 years according to Hylan, and has 24 programs running in the state. They are mostly in low-income areas where access to medical care can be difficult. These types of clinics are growing in the US, and according to the Connecticut Association of School Based Health Centers, there are more than 75 such centers throughout the state, providing services to more than 44,000 students each year.

Hylan said the clinics take a bit of getting used to for school districts, but eventually, "people wonder how they survived without us."

Would you like to see health clinics in Meriden schools? [Tell us in the comments.](#)

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