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## Waterford magnet school home to new clinic

By [Judy Benson](#), Day Staff Writer

### Nurse practitioner, behavioral counselor offering health care to growing roster of student patients

**Waterford** — For the past month and a half, Room 11 at the Dual Language & Arts Magnet Middle School has been a once-a-week refuge for students sick with sore throats or the flu, or needing care for asthma, diabetes or the effects of bullying, anxiety or depression.

"We're trying to provide patient care wherever our patients are," said Mark Masselli, president and chief executive officer of the Community Health Center, during brief ceremonies Thursday marking the opening of the school-based health center at the 3-year-old magnet school. "We're trying to make access less of a problem."

The center, in a converted classroom of the former Southwest Elementary School, offers the services of a nurse practitioner on Wednesdays, a behavioral counselor on Thursdays, as well as regular visits by a mobile dental clinic.

"This is a nice asset for the kids here," said Peter DeLisa, principal of the magnet school. "It provides an element of care beyond what the school nurse can provide."

Unlike the school nurse, who cannot prescribe or administer medications or run diagnostic tests, Kerry Stephenson, the nurse practitioner at the clinic, can give vaccinations, order antibiotics and test for strep throat and other infections. Stephenson said she's been seeing about seven patients each day the clinic has been open thus far, and the roster is growing steadily.

Sarah Rosen, the behavior health counselor, said she's been meeting with about eight students per day when she's at the school. Later that afternoon, she would be meeting with a student and her mother about the girl's depression symptoms.

Parents of about 20 of the school's 103 students have signed up for services at the clinic thus far, Stephenson said. Once signed up, each student meets one-on-one with Stephenson to go over health history and give each a chance to ask and answer a series of questions about his or her health. She refers students to Rosen for counseling sessions as needed.

"Middle school students have issues and need to talk about them with a trusted adult," DeLisa said. Rosen's services complement those of the school's social worker, who meets with students on Mondays, he added.

The Community Health Center, based in Middletown, runs primary-care clinics in 13 communities around the state, including New London and Groton. It also operates

school-based health clinics in seven school districts as well as at the ISAAC School in New London and the Marine Science Magnet High School of Southeastern Connecticut in Groton. The center also runs mobile dental clinics in New London schools.

Masselli said about half of the students enrolled in the new school clinic are patients at the New London and Groton sites. The school clinic is part of the same electronic medical records system as the larger sites, so all records from the school can be seamlessly transferred there, and visa versa.

The center receives reimbursement for care provided at the school clinic to students with HUSKY or Medicaid coverage and provides care to students without insurance free of charge, Masselli said. Students whose parents have private insurance also receive the care for free.

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