



For Immediate Release
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August 11, 2003

**Number of School-Based Health Centers Continue to Rise Across the United States,
National Survey Finds**

Washington, D.C.- The number of school-based health centers in the United States rose to nearly 1,500 (1498) in school year 2001/2002. This is a nine percent increase over two years, and an increase of 147% since 1994. The centers, which have been critical providers of primary care and mental health services to children and teens, are now in 43 states plus the District of Columbia, according to a recent survey conducted by the Center for Health and Health Care in Schools (CHHCS) at The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services.

School-based health centers provide comprehensive physical and mental health services to children in need of care at locations accessible to children and their families. They are mainly sponsored by hospitals, health departments, and community health centers, and are staffed by a multidisciplinary team of nurse practitioners, physicians, mental health and other providers. Once considered controversial, these centers have come to be viewed as one of the ways communities address the unmet needs of young people.

"The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has been investing in school-based health centers for more than a quarter of a century because we know for many children, it is their only access to care," said Judith Stavisky, M.Ed., M.P.H., senior program officer at the Foundation. "We are delighted that states and communities across the country have looked for ways to support these centers that provide medical and mental health services to the youngsters who need them most."

The growth of the centers is consistent with recently announced findings from a survey of parents' views on school health. That survey of a nationally representative sample of parents conducted for CHHCS by Lake Snell Perry & Associates, Inc. found that parents overwhelmingly support school-based health services and that support cuts across party lines, income levels and race.

According to the school-based health center survey, the centers are found in all kinds of communities and all kinds of schools.

- They are in urban (61%), rural (27%), and suburban (12%) communities.
- They are located in all regions of the country. Twenty- three percent of the centers are located in the Mid-Atlantic States; 19% are located in the Southeast & South Central states; 17% are in the Southwestern & Rocky Mountain states; 16% are in the Midwest; 13% are on the Pacific Coast and 12% of the centers are located in New England.
- 37% of the centers are housed in elementary schools, 36% are in high schools, and 18% are in middle/junior high schools. Since 1996, elementary schools have seen the largest growth in school-based health centers.
- Primary care providers (physicians, nurse practitioners, or physician assistant) work full-time in 54% of the centers and part-time (25 hours per week or less) in the remaining 46% of the centers.

Prevention and Health Promotion through school-based health centers

Prevention and health promotion services are core activities of school-based health centers.

The survey found that of the 30 states that report encouraging or funding school-based health centers, nutrition is cited as the most important prevention-related topic for school-based health centers. Other important prevention-related topics noted by these states include violence and conflict resolution skills and the prevention of alcohol and drug use.

Survey Background: The 2002 State Survey of School-Based Health Centers Initiatives consisted of 31 questions concerning the number of centers, their location, funding arrangements, and state policies regarding the centers. The survey was in the field from July to October 2002. Responses were gathered from fifty states and the District of Columbia.

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The Center for Health and Health Care in Schools (CHHCS), funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is a nonpartisan policy and program resource center located at The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services in Washington, DC. The complete findings from this survey are available on the CHHCS web site at www.healthinschools.org.