

The Children's Trust of Miami-Dade County Supporting School-based Health Centers



The Affordable Care Act, School Health, and the Children's Trust

One of the goals of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is to achieve the Triple Aim of reducing the cost of health care, improving care quality, and improving patients' experience with the health system. The Children's Trust (The Trust) of Miami-Dade County, Florida, sponsors school-based health centers (SBHCs) that are taking part in the ACA implementation and working to achieve the Triple Aim. In addition to sponsoring SBHCs and other health programs in schools, The Trust supports efforts to address the [social determinants of health](#) (e.g., housing, food access) by funding after-school tutoring programs, nutrition and physical education programs, public benefit enrollment, parenting education, and a wide variety of other health programs. This funding allows the SBHCs sponsored by The Trust to both provide health care and connect patients to resources that support overall health and well-being.

Accountable Health Communities: An Opportunity for SBHCs to Take Part in Health Reform

SBHCs excel at filling in gaps in the care their patients receive and coordinating care and services with other providers and community-based organizations. Recognizing the importance of nonclinical services in improving health, the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation, which was created by the ACA, offers Accountable Health Community grants to link clinical health care and the services offered by health departments, government agencies, and community-based organizations. Grantees enable patients who receive health care to also access services that address the social determinants of health. Many states are implementing similar programs, and as they become more common, the experience SBHCs have in working with nonclinical service providers could make them valuable partners in health reform efforts.

How The Children's Trust Supports SBHCs

The Trust currently collaborates with the University of Miami and Jessie Trice Community Health Center, a Federally Qualified Health Center, to operate SBHCs. The Trust brings some important unifying features to the two partners' SBHCs. All students in kindergarten and grades 1, 3, 6, and 9 receive screenings for vision, dental health, blood pressure, and body mass index in addition to the screenings mandated by state law. The Trust also leverages its sponsorship of other organizations to connect

SBHC patients to health and social services. For example, The Trust funds five community-based organizations to conduct community outreach and public benefit enrollment counseling. As a condition of their funding, The Trust requires that the community-based organizations work with its SBHCs to enroll students and their families in Medicaid, nutrition programs, housing and income assistance, and other benefit programs. SBHCs also refer their patients to other services and organizations supported by The Trust, including after-school activities and nutrition and physical education programs.

The University of Miami: Building on the ACA to Continue Innovation

With support from The Trust and the John T. MacDonal Foundation, the University of Miami operates four full-service SBHCs. Pediatricians and pediatric residents provide primary care. Clinical psychologists provide mental health services. Two of the SBHCs remain open to provide care during school summer breaks, and all of the SBHCs offer care to siblings of patients. As a teaching hospital, the University of Miami also views placing pediatric residents in SBHCs as a valuable tool in showing new doctors the strong link between health and education.

The University of Miami also focuses on connecting patients to community preventive services. During a typical visit, the doctor or psychologist will ask the patient about health issues (e.g., nutrition and reproductive health) that could be addressed through community preventive services and will make referrals when appropriate. Each SBHC also has a social worker to connect patients to services offered in the school and by community-based organizations. The SBHCs are currently collaborating with community-based organizations to deliver nutrition services and dental health, reproductive health, and mental health services to students.

The ACA has presented opportunities for the University of Miami's SBHCs. When the Department of Health and Human Services announced the establishment of the Health Care Innovation Awards in 2012, the University of Miami was eager to apply to show how SBHCs can improve health while also providing a positive return on investment. The federal government made these [grants](#) available to organizations to "test new care delivery and payment models, identify new ways to develop and use the health system workforce, and expand promising innovations." The University of Miami's SBHCs received one of the grants. The SBHCs used the award to develop telehealth capabilities, provide oral health and mental health services, and increase the number of patients enrolled in health insurance. Throughout the duration of the grant, the University of Miami tracked costs incurred and saved and found that SBHCs saved its health system more than \$4.3 million.

Telehealth

Telehealth capabilities allow the SBHCs to provide specialist care and make referrals to other providers in the University of Miami system. The most commonly

requested telehealth services during the award period were nutritionist consultations and school-to-school consultations (wherein school nurses ask doctors and nurse practitioners at other sites for guidance). Mental health and dermatology services are also offered via telehealth. Although the award period has concluded, The Trust has provided funding to continue these telehealth services.

Oral Health

The oral health component of the award focused on increasing access to basic oral health services (e.g., fluoride varnishes, sealants) and identifying patients with urgent and emergency care needs. The SBHCs provided fluoride varnishes and dental sealants to every patient who visited for oral health care (952 children 18 years or younger) and identified more than 30 percent of patients as needing follow-up oral care. The University of Miami viewed the oral health component as the most successful part of the award because it successfully served uninsured children 18 years or younger, a population in Florida that struggles to access oral health care.

Mental Health

The University of Miami also used the award to increase access to mental health services. SBHCs hired social workers and psychiatrists and connected patients in SBHCs without psychiatrists to these providers via telehealth. SBHC psychiatrists most frequently treated patients for depression, anxiety, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Social workers provided counseling related to family and peer issues, academic stress, and grief over the loss of a loved one. Mental health services are still in very high demand, although SBHCs have to overcome stigma and the difficulty of identifying patients with untreated mental health needs.

Community Health Workers

The award enabled the SBHCs to hire community health workers (CHWs) who focused on enrolling patients and their families in Medicaid and private health insurance. From 2012 to 2015, CHWs increased the percentage of patients with health insurance from 46 percent to 57 percent. The CHWs also conducted home environmental assessments for patients with asthma and helped individual patients develop asthma action plans. During home assessments, CHWs identified asthma triggers and educated patients and their families on ways to manage the condition. The asthma management program is continuing with the support of new funders.



Success Story

Dr. Jocelyn Lawrence, the director of the Innovation Award project, shared a story about her time at the University of Miami. For about a month, a student had been complaining to his father about chest pains, but the family did not have health insurance and could not afford a doctor's visit. The student went to the SBHC and reported the chest pain. The pediatric resident at the SBHC conducted a physical and an electrocardiogram that showed abnormal results. The resident referred the student to the University of Miami's hospital for emergency treatment. Later that month, the student had a scheduled cardiac surgery. All of his treatments were provided free of charge, and the student is now healthy and in college.

Leveraging ACA Funding to Establish Lasting Programs

The University of Miami has been successful in increasing access to primary care and specialty care among young people age 18 and under. Although the grant provided funding for only three years, the university has been able to continue many of the services the grant funded by demonstrating their efficacy and leveraging funding from other sources. The grant provided a lasting investment for the University of Miami's SBHCs and the young people they serve.

The Jessie Trice Community Health Center's SBHCs

With the support of The Trust, Jessie Trice Community Health Center (Jessie Trice CHC) operates two full-service SBHCs. The SBHCs offer physical and mental health services and collaborate with community-based organizations, the local health department, foundations, and businesses to provide community preventive services. Jessie Trice CHC has an agreement with the University of Miami to provide specialist care and oral health services to students via telehealth. Both of its SBHCs are patient-centered medical homes, which means that they are able to coordinate care with other providers, including community-based organizations, and use electronic health records to monitor whether referrals have been completed.

One of the SBHCs is accessible through its own entrance, so it serves as a clinic for non-students after school hours and during the summer. There is high demand in the community for health care, and visits by non-students to the SBHC have increased every month since its opening. Jessie Trice CHC now operates two SBHCs, and it would like to open more.

Similar to an Accountable Health Community, these SBHCs bring together primary care and community preventive services. The SBHCs collaborate with the lo-

cal health department to screen for sexually transmitted infections and to develop action plans and conduct home environmental assessments for students missing school as a result of asthma. In order to improve nutrition, SBHCs have partnered with Target and Wholesome Wave, a non-profit organization, to issue vouchers for fresh fruits and vegetables to students with a high body mass index. The SBHCs are also working with a nonprofit organization to provide vision care and glasses to uninsured students and students on Medicaid.

For patients without a traditional provider, SBHCs are able to serve as the primary care provider. For patients who have a primary care provider, SBHCs are able to fill in gaps in care, including managing chronic conditions during school hours and coordinating with primary care providers. Electronic health records enable the SBHCs to see whether patients have completed referrals and, if they have not, to remind them to do so.

As with many SBHCs, there is high demand for mental health services at the Jessie Trice SBHCs. Jessie Trice CHC receives financial support from The Trust and partners with an organization called Agape to hire licensed social workers and child psychiatrists who provide mental health services in SBHCs and the adjoining schools. Despite the high level of demand, providing mental health services to all students in need is a challenge. Jesse Trice CHC would like to partner with school district psychiatrists to increase access to mental health providers, but the school district also has limited capacity.

Conclusion

The Trust has supported SBHCs that have improved the health of both students and non-students. The SBHCs have been able to leverage their funding and build partnerships with community-based organizations and businesses to better serve students. Overall, The Trust's SBHCs can serve as an example to other SBHCs interested in trying new care delivery methods.

The Children's Trust of Miami-Dade County Supporting School-based Health Centers is one of a series of case studies featuring school-based health centers that have taken part in federal policy reforms, including the Affordable Care Act. In addition to increasing insurance coverage, federal health reform efforts have included programs to coordinate care offered by different providers and increase access to community preventive services and mental health services, among other initiatives. This series of case studies highlights the efforts of SBHCs and their sponsors to implement reforms to improve the health of the children and adolescents they serve. For more information about specific policies, see the companion pieces to these case studies, Federal Policies and Opportunities for School-Based Health Centers: For Sponsors and For Policymakers.

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About APHA

The American Public Health Association champions the health of all people and all communities. We strengthen the profession of public health, promote best practices and share the latest public health research and information. We are the only organization that influences federal policy, has a nearly 150-year perspective and brings together members from all fields of public health. Learn more at www.apha.org.

About CSHE

APHA's Center for School, Health and Education advances school-based health care as a proven strategy for preventing school dropout. We work with health and education partners to develop and implement public health strategies school-wide to improve the well-being and educational success of all students. Learn more at www.schoolbasedhealthcare.org.



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