

SCHOOL BASED HEALTH CENTERS

CHANGE, Inc.

Region 3 • Weirton, West Virginia
changeinc.org



Healthcare • Children

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

CHANGE Inc.'s School Based Health Centers (SBHC) establish a way to bring critical healthcare services to children with no other medical home - a place for a child to be diagnosed, treated, and sent back to the classroom if possible, all without parents needing to leave work, which they often do not have the ability to miss. Schools are the only safe haven for some of the children who face challenges ranging from sexual and physical abuse, hunger, and homelessness.

LOCAL NEED ADDRESSED

In 2012, 65% of the children at Weirton Elementary School were eligible for free or reduced lunch, and 26% of children living in Hancock County fell at or below the federal poverty guidelines.

Medical needs also presented a challenge: A growing number of local children were missing school due to illnesses or coming to school sick because their parents could not get them adequate treatment, as many local families did not have the transportation, time, or money to make regular visits to the doctor's office. For families falling at or below the federal poverty level, leaving work to take a child to the doctor is often not an option.

There was also an influx of migrant workers from the natural gas drilling industry and many of these transient laborers had children who lacked a medical home and, consequently, were often behind on basic medical care.

The opioid crisis also hit the agency's region hard



and had torn apart many area families, leaving children without access to their basic necessities.

Over time, the health care need became so desperate that local principals began transporting children to local medical providers to get them the care they desperately needed.

ROLE OF CSBG FUNDS

Community Services Block Grant Funding was instrumental in purchasing the dental equipment and furnishing the exam rooms. Local foundations, such as The Sisters of St. Joseph, The Mary Jane Brooks Foundation, The Serra Foundation, Delta Dental, Gulfport Energy, and the United Way provided additional support.

TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

With the exception of emergency care, no child is ever treated without the written permission from the parent/guardian. If a child already has a primary care physician, a summary of the visit is sent to the provider, with instructions for follow-up. The center also provides direct medical support for the school staff. SBHC services include:

- Well and sick child visits,
- Immunizations,
- Medication monitoring,
- Therapy sessions,
- Dental sealants/dental services (at two sites),
- Vision care screenings as special clinics,
- Behavioral/mental health services,
- Food for the weekends,
- Educational programs,
- Hygiene closets,
- Transportation service,
- Telemedicine units (newly added to respond to COVID), and
- Isolation rooms for COVID testing.

EVIDENCE-BASED OUTCOMES

There have been some community-wide improvements since CHANGE, Inc.'s SBHCs first opened.

As of 2013, 16.1% of Hancock County residents did not have insurance; In 2019, only 6.2% were without insurance. In 2013, 25.6% of Hancock County children lived in poverty; In 2019, that had dropped to 20.4%. 16.1% of the county was food insecure in 2014; but only 13.3% in 2019.

When an SBHC opened in Brooke County in 2018, 6% of residents were uninsured, 20.7% of children lived in poverty, and 13.4% had food insecurities. A year later 5.2% were uninsured, 19.4% lived in poverty, and 12.5% were food insecure.

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