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# Number of school health centers to double

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Written by Jessica Brown

Within the next two years 10 new health centers are planned to open inside Cincinnati Public school buildings, providing health care access to an additional 6,230 low-income students.

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That will double the number of school-based health centers in the region's largest district. The district had just four centers in 2005.

The expansion is possible because of a new partnership between non-profit, health care, and government groups and keeps CPS squarely in the lead statewide. Already a third of the 29 centers in the state are located at CPS schools, more than in any other district.

School-based health centers are clinics inside school buildings where students can get vaccinations, dental check ups, eyeglasses and even mental health counseling.

School Based Health Centers in Ohio

Ohio is home to 29 school-based health

The centers exist nationwide and are meant

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considered poor and 66 percent have chronic health conditions. CPS started creating school-based health centers in 1999. District officials have said the centers have improved state test scores, attendance and and graduation rates at the schools they serve.

The expansion plan, announced Monday was prompted by sudden funding cuts to the

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Cincinnati Health Department's school nurse program last year.

The region's health, non-profit, government and district leaders realized they needed a long-term solution for student health care "so we're not at the political whims of decision makers every two to four years," said Rocky Merz, spokesman for the Cincinnati Health Department.

So the Greater Cincinnati Health Foundation partnered with the school district, the Cincinnati Health Department and several other groups under the umbrella of Growing Well Cincinnati, to create a long-term plan to fund student health care.

They started raising money and getting commitments of support from businesses and health care providers. The Health Foundation currently has enough money to open three to four new centers. Leaders expect to raise enough to start 10 by the end of 2013.

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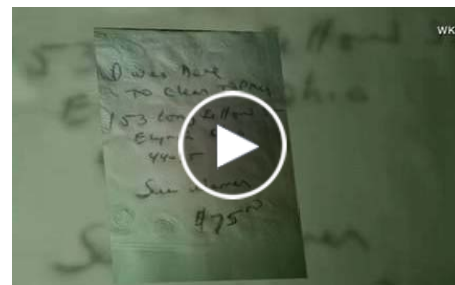
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