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School-Based Health Centers

Case for Support

Updated: January 2025

Introduction

Bassett Healthcare Network serves an eight county area of predominantly rural Central New York. In Otsego County, the home of Bassett Medical Center and A.O. Fox Hospital – the network’s two major hospitals – the median household income is \$65,778 and over 13% of families live below the poverty line.¹ These figures are much the same in the other counties of the network, including Delaware County, in which 14.6% of families live below the poverty line.² These economic pressures impact children and their parents in a variety of ways. Often, parents find it difficult to take children to medical appointments – including both sick and well visits – because they struggle to take time off from work or lack means of transportation. These families also often lack or have inadequate health insurance. When compared with children who have insurance coverage, uninsured children have fewer visits to physicians, are less likely to be seen by physicians when they are sick or injured, and are less likely to receive adequate preventative services, including immunizations.³

Bassett Healthcare Network is confronting this important issue head-on with the Bassett School-Based Health Center program. Currently, there are 22 individual school-based health centers across 18 school districts in the Bassett service area, providing no-cost comprehensive medical, mental health and, in some schools, dental health care. Currently, over 7,500 students, from pre-K to grade 12, are enrolled in the program, some with insurance and many without. The program is only possible because of the generosity of Bassett’s donors and grantmakers.



Executive Summary

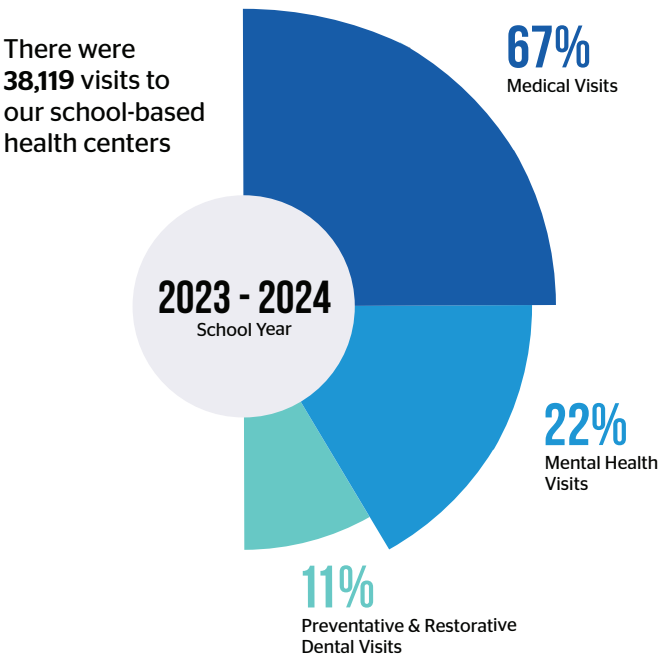
Having been in operation now for over 30 years, Bassett's school-based health center program is recognized as a leader in providing care to children who might otherwise never have the chance to see a doctor, a dentist, or a therapist. The centers provide sick care, but they also provide a child's routine preventative care, including annual exams and immunizations. Mental health services are available in person at some sites, or via telehealth appointments at others – a critical service as each year 1 in 5 U.S. youth aged 6 to 17 experience a mental health disorder, and suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among people aged 10-14.

We are proud to report that Bassett's School-Based Health Program has garnered high accolades and wide attention for its work. It has received the Outstanding Rural Health Program Award from the National Rural Health Association. Its dental health program was honored with a Community Health Improvement Award from the Healthcare Association of New York State. Recently, our local NPR affiliate, WSKG, broadcast a story highlighting the widespread local impact of the school-based health program on the lives of families in our service area.

During the 2023-2024 school year, 7,537 students were enrolled in the program, 82 percent of the total school population. There were 38,911 visits to our school-based health centers. 67 percent were medical visits, 22 percent were mental health visits, and 11 percent were preventative and restorative dental visits. 89 percent of school-based health patients are up-to-date on their immunizations, including annual flu vaccines and the cancer-preventing HPV vaccine which are not required by schools. 77 percent of all school-based health patients have a documented annual exam, which exceeds the national average.⁴

School-based health centers address the impact of economic disparities on adolescent healthcare in more ways than simply providing no-cost care to families. The centers are physically located at the child's school, and do not require the parent to be on campus for the appointment. This means that parents do not need to take time away from work or other duties (such as providing care to younger children or older adults in the families). It also means that students do not need to miss all of or part of a day of school to commute to an appointment. They simply need a hall pass. This can be especially important for students who are seeing a practitioner for mental health concerns. As leaving class to attend an appointment at the school-based health center is normalized, students may avoid any potential stigma related to seeing a therapist. By having a child's primary care, mental health, and dental care all on one site, students can quickly and easily access needed services with minimal impact on their studies.

Our school-based health center program is led by William Fredette, MD, Kerri LeBlanc, MD, and Jane Hamilton, RN. The leadership team has expanded over time to support the increased size and the scope of the program, including dental health care providers.



The Need

Providing high-quality, comprehensive care for children in our area is a labor of love for our caregivers and providers, and a point of pride for all Bassett staff, but it is undeniably an expensive undertaking. Each individual school and school district contributes financially to building and maintaining the physical center, but the budget to provide for personnel and non-personnel costs is about \$4,300,000 a year, with a \$2,000,000 gap in funding annually. Non-personnel costs cover immunizations, testing supplies for well-child visits, acute and chronic disease care, dental equipment, telehealth technology, and other related program needs.

HEALTH

Your support of Bassett Healthcare Network's school-based health centers plays a vital role in the health of our communities by investing directly in the health and wellbeing of our youngest neighbors. With your gift, you are not only supporting Bassett, but also giving back to your community by supporting its children and their families.



COMMUNITY

Bassett Medical Center's school-based health centers will have a significant impact over time, affecting thousands of children. The long-term benefits of childhood access to primary care, mental, and dental health care serve to strengthen the whole community – thanks to your gift.



Your Contribution

- Funds annual examinations which are the foundation of children's health care. These examinations are opportunities to provide important education, anticipatory guidance, physical examination, and needed referrals for serious conditions.
- Ensures that patients with chronic care conditions are seen on a regular interval in an effort to effectively control their disease.
- Helps us continue to immunize children and adolescents against HPV and influenza.
- Helps us expand our telehealth program that allows our school-based health center doctors and nurses to follow up on patients with chronic illnesses such as asthma, obesity, depression, ADHD, and anxiety. It also allows students to connect with their out-of-network specialists, or speak to their mental healthcare provider remotely.
- Allows us to reach youth of all ages with the quality and compassionate medical care they need in order to thrive.

The History of the Organization

Bassett Healthcare Network is an integrated healthcare system that provides care and services to people living in an eight-county region covering 5,600 square miles in rural upstate New York. The network includes five corporately affiliated hospitals, a stand-alone emergency department, over two dozen community-based health centers, 22 school-based health centers, two skilled nursing facilities, one assisted living facility, a home health agency, and other health partners in related fields. Bassett Healthcare Network treats, on average, more than 3,000 patients per day and over one million patients annually.

For more about Bassett Healthcare Network today, visit www.bassett.org.



¹"U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts: United States," <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045222>. Accessed 2.15.24.

²"Home - Books - NCBI," National Center for Biotechnology Information (U.S. National Library of Medicine), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books>. Accessed 1.27.23.

³"Home - Books - NCBI," National Center for Biotechnology Information (U.S. National Library of Medicine), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books>. Accessed 1.27.23.

⁴"Child and Adolescent Well-Care Visits," NCQA, <https://www.ncqa.org/hedis/measures/child-and-adolescent-well-care-visits/>. Accessed 1.23.23.



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