



Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support Parents' Perceptions of Minneapolis School Based Clinics

Research Brief, August 2010

School Based Clinic services

School Based Clinics provide a variety of services to high school students in Minneapolis, including medical care, counseling, health education, prescriptions, and laboratory services. Parents are provided with information and are asked to return a form indicating whether they consent to the use of clinic services by their child. They may choose one of three options:

- To grant consent for the use of any of the health services available;
- To grant consent for the use of any service except birth control counseling and prescriptions; or
- To refuse to grant consent for the use of clinic services.

In an ongoing effort to elicit parents' perspectives, a brief survey was provided to them to return to the clinic. The survey listed potential benefits of the clinics for students and for parents and asked parents to select which they believed were most important. The survey also asked about the best way for clinic staff to provide descriptive information to parents and permitted them to offer any additional recommendations or comments.

Between September 2009 and May 2010, 1,613 surveys were completed by parents from Edison, Henry, South, Washburn and Roosevelt high schools. This brief report summarizes their responses.

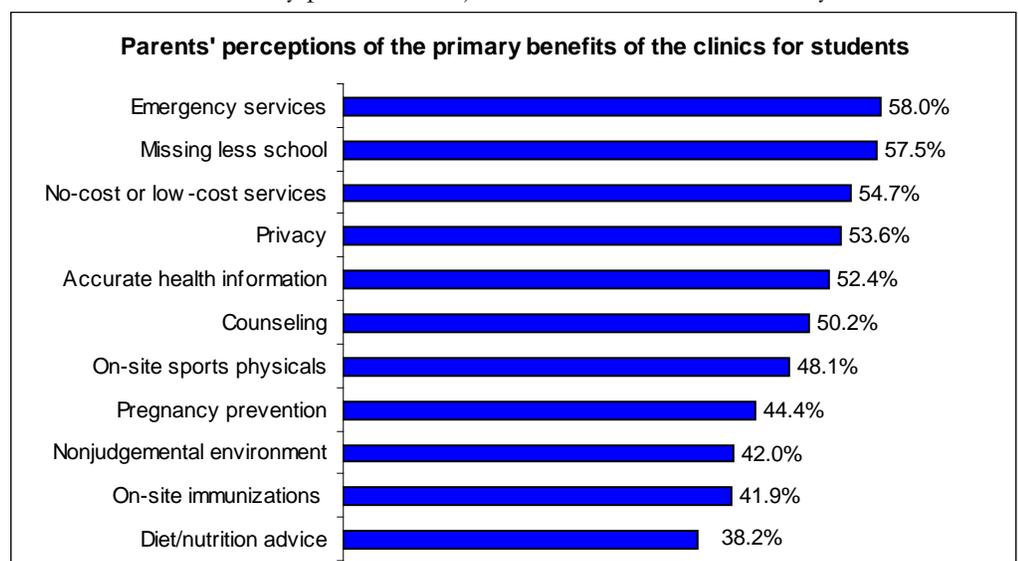
Parents' discussion with students about school-based clinic services

Nearly 3 out of 5 (59.6%) parents who responded said they had discussed the school-based clinic services with their teen and a similar percentage (59.3%) they had encouraged their teen to use the services.

Parents' perceptions of how the clinics benefit students

Parents who responded to the survey selected an average of 5 or 6 of the 10 options of the primary ways the School Based Clinics benefit students. The most commonly perceived major benefits are the accessibility of emergency health services, students missing less school, low-cost health care services and the amount of privacy students receive while being treated. Other major benefits identified by the majority of parents include having the clinics available as a source of accurate health information and the availability of counseling for teens.

Other benefits cited include the convenience of on-site immunizations as well as advice on diet and nutrition.

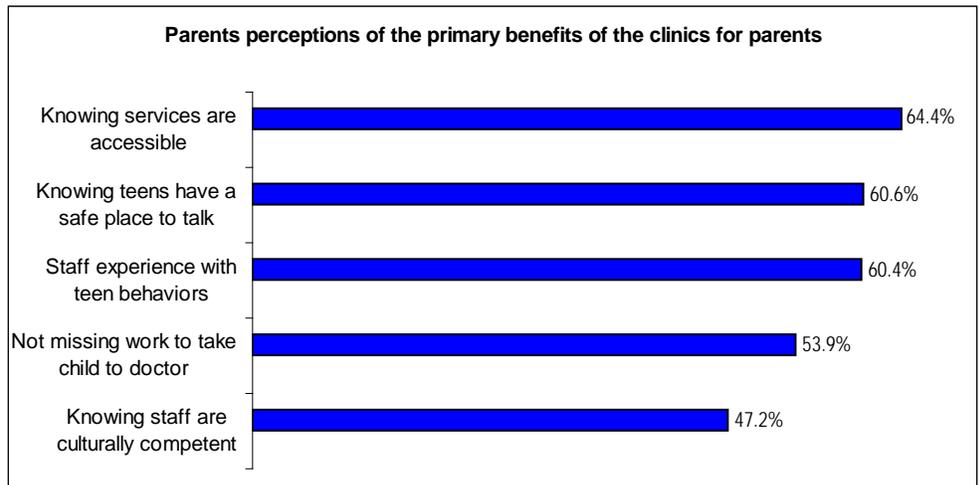


Parents' opinions reveal that they appreciate both the practical benefits of clinic services, in terms of accessibility and cost, as well as their sensitivity to the needs of teens.

Parents' perceptions of how the clinics benefit parents

Parents who responded to the survey typically selected 3 out of 5 major benefits the clinics provide for parents. The greatest benefits for parents relate to their confidence in how the School Based Clinics serve their children. Nearly two-thirds said that knowing the services are easily accessible to their children is an important benefit. More than half of parents also cited as beneficial that knowing their teens have a safe place to talk and that clinic staff have a great deal of experience talking to teens about health issues such as sex and preventing pregnancy, drug use, and other high risk behaviors.

A key practical advantage is noted as well. More than half appreciate the benefit of not having to miss work to take their child to a doctor. Nearly half the parents also acknowledge the benefit of knowing staff is skilled at serving teens from different cultural backgrounds.



Parents' suggestions for the best ways to provide them with clinic information

Two-thirds of parents (66.1 percent) believe that the brochure the clinics send home with the consent form is the best way for clinic staff to give them information about the clinics. Much smaller proportions endorsed the other two suggestions offered. A minority (35.5 percent) thought open houses for parents was the best way, and fewer than one-fourth (21 percent) thought that evening informational sessions would be best. Several parents had also indicated web-based communication strategies such as email or website could be promising.

Parents' recommendations and comments

In response to an open ended question about how to improve the school-based clinics, parents offered a variety of suggestions including increasing the presence of male clinic staff/nurses, providing more pregnancy and STD prevention education, encourage an open door policy by offering non-judgmental communications and positive interactions with students, and increasing awareness and usage of clinic services among both students and parents.

Conclusions

Overall, parents continue to show strong support for the school based clinics. Most parents who took advantage of the opportunity to share their perspectives had positive things to say, such as "I think they are doing a great job" and "keep up the great work you do for our kids." Parents also specifically acknowledged the importance of school based clinic services to students without health insurance. In addition, they appreciated the convenience of clinic services and the fact that they did not have to take time off work to take their child to a doctor.