“They Get Me”:
Connecticut School Based Health Centers Engage Adolescent African-American and Latino Males in Mental Health Services

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Project Background

The project was launched with one simple question:

“How many African-American and Latino adolescent young men receive mental health services in CT SBHCs?”

The answer was -- We didn’t know ....
Research Questions

The utilization of mental health services among adolescent males of color was of particular interest to the CT Health Foundation

- How many African-American and Latino adolescent males use SBHC mental health services?
- How often do they use SBHC mental health services?
- Why do they use SBHC services more than community-based treatment services?
- What have been the health outcomes of these interventions?
What We Did

1) Analysis of data collected by all School Based Health Centers (SBHCs)
2) Literature review of relevant publications
3) Focus groups with adolescent males that used mental health services in SBHCs

**Focus Groups:** 22 adolescent males ages 13-18 years
- 45% African American; 55% Latino

**Setting:** 4 geographic areas in Connecticut (4 high schools; 3 middle schools)
- All in urban, low socioeconomic areas
- Schools similar in racial and ethnic demographics
Four significant study findings:

- In CT School Based Health Centers (SBHC), African-American and Latino adolescent male students utilize mental health services at an average of 13.6 visits per student. In community-based mental health treatment, the majority drop out after 2-3 sessions.

- SBHCs remove or mitigate barriers to mental health treatment for African-American and Latino adolescents males.

- SBHCs provide an atmosphere of safety, confidentiality and trust; characteristics that are of paramount importance to adolescent males.

- Students perceived the School Based Health Centers staff as open and nonjudgmental - critical to student engagement in services.
Partnerships made it happen

- CASBHC contracted UConn School of Nursing to develop the Brief
- CASBHC contracted a design firm for the layout
- CASBHC Workgroup wrote the content and guided the layout
- DPH had the aggregate SBHC data in Clinical Fusion
- CASBHC formed a Data Workgroup for the project
- CASBHC contracted Institute for Community Research: student interviews
Research to Advocacy

- Issue Brief was the centerpiece of a Legislative Advocacy Kickoff event in September 2012
- Participated in a legislative forum on “Improving Student Health to Close the Achievement Gap”
- Distributed 1500 copies of the Issue Brief to advocates, community agencies, legislators, SBHC sites, foundations, and at an NPR health disparities forum
- Used text and quotes from the Brief in legislative public hearings to discourage cuts to SBHCs
- Invited to provide testimony on SBHCs and children’s mental health before legislative mental health task force after Newtown tragedy - used parts of Issue Brief in remark
- Currently preparing research paper for publication
The CT Association of School Based Health Centers was incorporated in 1996 as the single formalized voice of School Based Health Centers (SBHC) in CT.

CASCBC represents 80 SBHCs sites in 20 communities, funded by the Department of Public Health.

CASCBC focus areas are: advocacy for school based health centers; technical assistance and training; and a centralized resource for information about SBHC services, staffing, funding, development, and sustainability.

“Healthy Kids Make Better Learners”
Healthy Kids
Make Better Learners

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