|  |
| --- |
| Teens Talk: Ten Marketing Steps to Increase SBHC Utilization |
| Key Findings from Exploratory Student Interviews and Focus Groups |
|  |
| In February 2011, The Office of School and Adolescent Health (OSAH) embarked on a project to solicit students’ feedback on ways to best promote School-based Health Centers (SBHCs) to students. Led by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention fellow, Inas Mahdi, OSAH conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups with nearly 100, Hispanic, Native American and African American students at three Albuquerque Metropolitan high schools. Attached is a summary of actionable steps for SBHCs based on those interviews and focus groups. |
|  |
| *Inas Mahdi, MPH Office of School and Adolescent Health(OSAH)* |
| *9/27/2011* |
|  |

**Ten Marketing Steps to Increase Utilization of Your School Based Health Center**

1. **Tell students about the SBHC if you want them to use it.** A main barrier to SBHC use by students is simply lack of awareness. Students may not know what the SBHC is and why they should know about it or use it.
2. **Remind them creatively and consistently about what the SBHC is all about.** Even if they were told on the first day of school, remember--students don’t retain everything from those first few weeks of school. Students suggest general and targeted outreach to improve awareness- posters, information tables during lunch, classroom presentations, School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) outreach campaigns, and listing hours of operation on the school marquis and website.
3. **Highlight how the SBHC differs from the School Nurse Office.** Many students confuse the SBHC with the school nurse office. Clarify what primary and behavioral health services the SBHC offers and how these differ from school nurse services.
4. **Clearly tell students what is and what is not confidential.** There can be confusion as to which services can be accessed confidentially and which cannot. This should be clarified as best possible as it may deter students from seeking services. Some students mention wanting to involve parents when accessing confidential services. Many students with existing providers mention wanting the SBHC as an additional place to seek confidential services.
5. **Show students who you are, what you do and why you are qualified to do it.** Students want to know who works in the SBHC, what their qualifications are and when they are available to help students.
6. **Talk about the services students want and how you deliver them.** The four main services students said they were most likely to use were: treatment for at-school injuries, counseling, sports physicals, and sexual and reproductive health services. SBHC providers must take every opportunity to promote these desired services. Once students are using the center, opportunities to provide broader preventive services may emerge.
7. **Give students what they want: Support and Accurate Information.** Students value providers and experiences where they feel supported in their endeavors and are given accurate information about health. Students want help with their issues and answers to questions they may not be able to ask others. Students also express a strong desire for personal success and want providers who are genuinely supportive of them.
8. **Give students what they want II: Short waits and friendly, nonjudgmental Staff.** Students want an easy appointment making system, short waiting times as well as friendly, nonjudgmental SBHC staff.
9. **Use your resources! Call on current users, SHACs, parents, teachers, coaches, and other influential adults.** Students suggest a multipronged approach to promote the message of the SBHC’s value. Some students want to hear about the SBHC from their parents, which suggests parents may be an underutilized ally in SBHC promotion. Students want to hear about the SBHC from other students who use the center, as well as teachers, coaches and principals to reinforce the SBHC’s importance.
10. **Use student validated materials to increase SBHC visibility and awareness.** OSAH is creating SBHC promotional materials for use in schools. These posters are just one element of a comprehensive marketing strategy and will be available in the coming months. In the meantime, these 10 steps are the action items that youth say should be done to promote SBHC services to students.