

The Role of School-Based Health Centers in Addressing Dropout: A Content Analysis

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Background

School dropout is epidemic, particularly among racial and ethnic minorities. Located in poor and medically-underserved areas, School-based Health Centers (SBHCs) can play a pivotal role in reducing school dropout through primary prevention, early identification and multidisciplinary interventions. Yet, SBHCs are a largely unrecognized resource. Due to a confluence of factors impacting academic performance in conjunction with methodological limitations, SBHCs are challenged to document their direct contributions to dropout prevention. SBHCs are challenged to document their direct contributions to dropout prevention. A targeted initiative in Massachusetts is underway to promote awareness of the role that the health sector, especially SBHCs can play in reducing dropout.

Study Design & Approach

The study included secondary analysis of narrative segments (3 of 9) of three years (06-07, 07-08, 08-09) of annual reports submitted by 45 Massachusetts SBHCs and two focus groups of SBHC clinicians. Total of 135 reports reviewed.

Study design and approach influenced by:

1. Indicators and recommendations made in the seminal article, *Reframing school dropout as a public health issue "Develop, implement, and evaluate health interventions to improve school completion rates, (Freudenberg/Regalis, 2007)."*

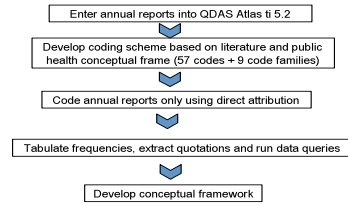
2. A Public Health Conceptual Prevention Model

High Dropout + Risk Factors + Targeted Interventions = Behavior Changes

Objectives

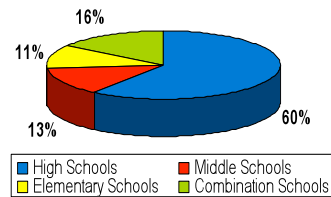
- > Demonstrate a novel analytic approach to documenting the direct impact of health services on academic issues.
- > Describe the potential of a public health prevention model as it relates to the issues of school dropout and the role that School-based Health Centers can play.
- > Discuss a conceptual framework to plan, navigate, and describe School-based Health Centers' contributions to the learning environment

Methods



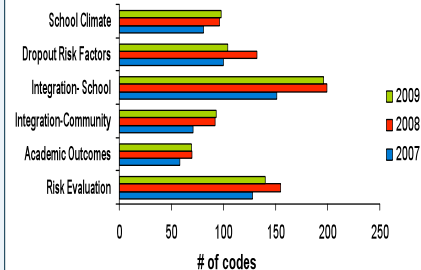
Sample

SBHCs by Grade Level N=45



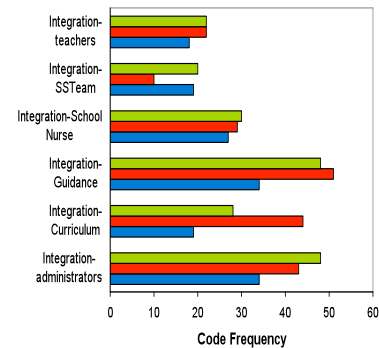
Results

Frequencies by Code Families



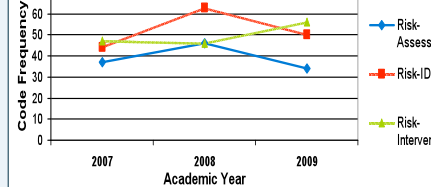
Results

Integration School, N= 45 SBHCs



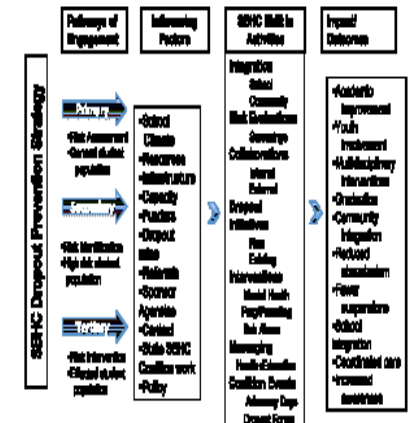
The health center Social Worker was involved in suspension hearings and core evaluations. The Nurse Practitioner collaborated with the School Nurse and Attendance Officer around health and wellness issues. They also worked closely with the Adolescent Parenting Program staff, Intensive Support Program staff, and the Counseling interns.

SBHC Primary, Secondary, Tertiary Risk Evaluation Linked to Academic Issues N=45 SBHCs



In our clinic each patient is screened for risk factors at each visit: Mental health, including alcohol and drug use, emotional health and relationship conflicts; Academic function, including grades, attendance and potential for drop out; Reproductive health, including pregnancy and STD/HIV risk, prenatal health, parenting skills.

SBHC Dropout Prevention Framework



Conclusions

- > This research demonstrates that SBHC clinicians themselves may be an excellent source of data regarding the health effects of educational interventions.
- > While the SBHC annual report analysis point to many targeted efforts supportive of dropout prevention work, findings must be viewed as multi-factorial.
- > Despite methodological limitations of using a tool not originally intended to capture dropout, the findings begin to move beyond theory to practice and respond to directives from the research literature, "Capture reciprocal connections between health and school achievement, documenting integration between health education and services in the school and community (Freudenberg/Regalis, 2007)."

Acknowledgements/References

- > Funding provided by W.K.Kellogg Foundation, School-Based Health Care Policy program
- > Special thanks to the SBHC clinicians of Massachusetts
- > Freudenberg N, Ruglis J. Reframing School dropout as a public health issue. Prev Chronic Dis 2007
- > Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Community Health and Promotion, School-Based Health Center Annual Report Template, 2009, <http://www.mass.gov/dph/schoolbasedhealthcenters>, accessed 9/15/09