



NEWS RELEASE

Tuesday, May 29, 2007

In-school clinic puts children closer to pediatric care

SASKATOON, May 29, 2007 – Families and children living in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods can now visit a pediatrician in a brand-new, easier-to-access setting: a local school.

The clinic, among the first of its kind in Canada, began operation in April 2007 at St. Mary Community School in Pleasant Hill. The clinic operates through a partnership between Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools, the University of Saskatchewan Department of Pediatrics, Saskatoon Tribal Council, Saskatoon Public Schools and the Saskatoon Health Region.

"One of our school division's new themes focuses on reaching out to make a positive difference in the world," says Bev Hanson, Director of Education for Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools. "In this instance, with the creation of an in-school pediatrics clinic, we are reaching out to our community to help our children, some of whom are among the most vulnerable in our city."

The clinic brings pediatric care to children who otherwise may not receive it because of several barriers, including: distance, lack of transportation or inconvenient operating hours.

The clinic, in the Cultural Room at St. Mary, is equipped much like a regular doctor's office, with an examining table and basic pediatric medical supplies. It is staffed three days a week by pediatricians from the Department of Pediatrics.

"The Department of Pediatrics is committed to being receptive and responsive to the health-care needs of children and youth in our community, as these needs are perceived by the community," says Dr. William Bingham, Head, Department of Pediatrics, with the University of Saskatchewan and Saskatoon Health Region. "We believe that our department can be more effective by working with and in the community, and what better place to do this than the local school."

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Space and equipment for the clinic are supplied by Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools. Saskatoon Tribal Council is providing a medical receptionist who is at the clinic when a pediatrician is at the school.

“Our partnerships are focusing on creating solutions, with one solution targeted to bring medical care into the community,” says Tribal Chief Joe Quewezance, Saskatoon Tribal Council. “We are focusing on ensuring young, school-age kids are getting early assessment and interventions that facilitate their learning successes.”

Though the clinic is located within St. Mary Community School, services of the pediatricians are available to all children, including those who are not yet in school or who attend nearby public schools. Parents may call or bring their children to the clinic to engage its services or, school staff with consent from parents may bring students to the clinic.

“This clinic is a marvelous example of how partnerships and agencies working together can make a tangible impact in a neighbourhood,” says George Rathwell, Deputy Director of Education for Saskatoon Public Schools. “Schools are the centre of the community and making health services available in the school makes so much sense.”

A Saskatoon Health Region study released last November found that people living in six low-income neighbourhoods in Saskatoon have significantly lower health status compared to residents in five specific affluent neighbourhoods and all other Saskatoon residents. For example, injuries and poisonings, infant mortality, low birth rate and low immunization rates were all observed at greater incidence in the low-income neighbourhoods.

The study has spurred community members and service providers to work together to address health disparity. Creation of the pediatrics clinic is an innovative approach to delivering community-based health services to children in low-income neighbourhoods and is an important step in improving the health and well-being of these communities.

“This clinic is but one example of the changes that we need to make in our low-income neighbourhoods,” says Shan Landry, Vice President, Community Services, Saskatoon Health Region. “By making service delivery changes, investing new resources and finding other solutions to build health equities for the residents living in the six low-income neighbourhoods, residents will be able to lead healthier, happier and more prosperous lives and be able to enjoy the same level of quality of life that others enjoy.”

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