



# LINCOLN HEALTH FOUNDATION

*Improving Health Care and Outcomes for Residents of Lincoln Parish*

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<b>Initiative:</b>	Healthier Outcomes & Access to Health Care
<b>Project Name:</b>	Health Enterprise to Assist Lincoln's Students (HEALS IV)
<b>Funding Period:</b>	January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2012
<b>Date of Funding:</b>	January 1, 2012
<b>Project Coordinator:</b>	Sonja Cardwell, RN, Lincoln Parish School Board
<b>Project Administration:</b>	Lincoln Parish School Board
<b>Total Funding Approved:</b>	\$ 250,000.00

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## Program Summary

Lincoln Parish School Board **HEALS** is a health initiative designed to meet basic safety needs of indigent students in Lincoln Parish. Indigent students are defined in the proposal as those whose family income level qualifies them to receive free or reduced lunches, as defined by the State of Louisiana. Because of the high poverty rate in Lincoln Parish, many students meet these qualifications. Many of these students and their families have health issues which are not addressed by government programs. These issues include dental problems, difficulties accessing health care facilities and providers due to lack of transportation, as well as the need for access to school nurses. The Lincoln Parish School Board **HEALS** initiative addresses these problems by bringing the following resources to bear in several Lincoln Parish schools with the highest poverty levels:

The Lincoln Parish School Board **HEALS IV** (Health Enterprise to Assist Lincoln's Students) initiative will benefit students as follows:

- 1. School Nurses.** The two school nurses hired in 2011 on a contract basis through the HEALS III initiative will be continued in the HEALS IV initiative. School nurses attend to the needs of students at nineteen schools. Three nurses divide their time among the schools, and the fourth nurse is based at Glen View Elementary School (FRL=61.99%).
- 2. Nursing Software:** HEALS IV funding will be used to continue the utilization of the J-Health Student Data Management Information System software. Nurses utilize this software to input student's medical data, enabling them to record health issues that assist in the prevention of misdiagnosis or overtreatment. All personal information remains secure.
- 3. Dental Health.** For many reasons, indigent children often suffer from poor dental health, and their problems may become compounded with neglect over time.

Funding provided by the HEALS IV initiative will be used to continue the dental care program which began under HEALS I.

**A. Dental Screenings.** HEALS IV funding will provide for dental screenings to all third graders in Lincoln Parish, including those at A. E. Phillips, Bethel Christian, and Cedar Creek. Screenings will also be provided to all sixth graders in Lincoln Parish. The HEALS Coordinator will contact area dental hygienists to work with our school nurses and perform brief dental examinations to determine problem areas or potential problems. These screenings will be helpful both in detecting dental problems and in preventing them. In 2010, HEALS provided screenings for 361 third graders, revealing 168 students needing dental treatment. Without screenings, nurses and school personnel do not become aware of children's dental problems until students come to the office and complain of pain. By that time, the problem is usually quite severe and requires greater expense to correct. By providing dental screenings to all third graders in the parish, school personnel are able to identify correctable dental problems or potential problems and help children better understand the need for proper dental hygiene and provide knowledge which will benefit them throughout their lives. Dental screenings benefit as many as 500 third graders and 500 sixth graders annually.

**B. Vouchers for Visits to Dentists.** Indigent students who have a nurse-confirmed dental problem are allotted a nontransferable voucher which pays for a visit to a local dentist to correct cavities, abscesses, or similar problems. Though indigent students are usually eligible for Medicaid, which pays for dental care, only one dentist in the area accepts Medicaid payments, making it extremely difficult to obtain an appointment in a timely manner for a child in need. By providing vouchers for visits to other dentists, classroom interruptions involving students who are in pain are reduced, absenteeism caused by illnesses brought on by infections in the mouth is reduced, and dental treatments is available for students who would likely not have access to needed dental care.

**4. Mental Health.** Many Lincoln Parish students are in need of the services of a professional mental health counselor. Some students suffer from behavioral problems due to substance abuse by their parents during pregnancy. Some have behavioral problems because of familial issues which have affected them, and acting out is their way of coping with the situation.

**A. Mental Health Counselor.** HEALS IV funding will enable the continued employment of the mental health counselor procured through the HEALS III initiative. The mental health counselor was used effectively in 2010 to determine the origin of behavioral problems involving troubled students. For students who suffer from any of the problems listed below (identified by their teacher, school counselor, or school nurse), the counselor provides immediate access to mental health assistance. The counselor works with the district's Pupil Appraisal Office, assisting high-need students at Ruston Elementary School in any of the following areas.

- **Social Skills Education:** Topics include working as a team, giving and gaining respect, connecting with others appropriately, making social groups, and making and keeping friends. Hygiene and social interaction issues are also taught.

- Attachment Disorders: Indigent children often experience problems attaching to adults or others – for a variety of reasons, including parental abandonment.
- Anger Management
- Depression
- Substance Abuse
- Family Issues: For students who have problems with their parents or oppositional defiance.
- Social Work Issues: Examples include getting students involved in extra-curricular activities, tutoring, or anything else that will help them cope better with their issues.
- Academic Counseling
- Isolation Issues
- Trust Issues
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Issues

HEALS IV funds will be used to pay the counselor's salary, purchase supplies and assessment instruments, and provide professional development.

**5. HEALS Coordinator.** The Lincoln Parish School's HEALS Coordinator is Sonja Cardwell, a school nurse who is familiar with the specific problems of indigent children in Lincoln Parish Schools. Debbie Young, another school nurse, shares Sonja's HEALS Coordinator responsibilities on an as-needed basis. HEALS IV funds will be utilized to fund the Coordinator's time managing and coordinating the HEALS IV program. As in previous HEALS initiatives, the Coordinator's job is multi-faceted and consists of the following responsibilities:

- Continue to work with Lincoln Health Foundation members to strengthen the network of hygienists, dentists, counselors, optometrists, and transportation providers who will accept our vouchers and assist our indigent students.
- Improve the voucher system used last year as needed.
- Serve as the contact person for the other school nurses and principals who desire to refer a student for any of the above services.
- Maintain accurate records of the numbers of students impacted in each area, the amount of money spent in each area, and anecdotal records which reveal program successes as well as areas of weakness.
- Keep track of the funds of the program and submit quarterly reports to the Lincoln Health Foundation.
- Decide how best to transfer these funds and submit to the Lincoln Health Foundation a formal written request for a budget revision, explaining the need for the transfer and a revised budget, should additional funds be required in any area.