



LINCOLN HEALTH FOUNDATION

Improving Health Care and Outcomes for Residents of Lincoln Parish

Grant Summary

Initiative:	Healthier Outcomes & Access to Health Care
Project Name:	Health Enterprise to Assist Lincoln's Students (HEALS VIII)
Funding Period:	July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017
Date of Funding:	July 1, 2016
Project Coordinator:	Sonja Cardwell, RN, Lincoln Parish School Board
Project Administration:	Lincoln Parish School Board
Total Funding Approved:	\$ 225,407.67

Program Summary

Lincoln Parish Schools **HEALS (Health Enterprise to Assist Lincoln's Students)** is a health initiative designed to meet basic safety needs of indigent students in Lincoln Parish. Indigent students are defined 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 and their families have health issues which are not addressed by government programs. These health 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. For the past four years, the Lincoln Parish Schools **HEALS** initiative has addressed these problems by bringing resources to those Lincoln Parish schools with the greatest rate of impoverished students and/or the greatest opportunities for improving outcomes or access to health care services.

The Lincoln Parish Schools **HEALS VIII** initiative provides continuation of the **HEALS** objectives from prior years which have produced the greatest success and address the largest needs. The **HEALS VIII** objectives are as follows:

- 1. School Nurses.** The three school nurses hired through prior **HEALS** initiatives will again be continued in the **HEALS VIII** initiative. A total of four (4) school nurses currently

attend to the needs of students at nineteen Lincoln Parish schools. Lincoln Parish Schools currently do not meet the nurse to student ratio required by the State of Louisiana. Recent redistricting in Lincoln Parish - occurring as a result of a federal government report in 2011 that found that three of the four elementary schools in Ruston were predominantly one-race schools – has resulted in the redistribution of impoverished students to a larger number of schools. As a result, school nurses are required to cover the needs of impoverished students at a larger number of schools. **HEALS VIII** continues to address the growing need for school nurse coverage brought on by recent redistricting, but it also enables Lincoln Parish Schools to finally meet the State’s required nurse to student ratio.

2. **Nursing Station Supplies & Equipment:** Purchase of nursing station supplies necessary to support the four school nurses is provided for with **HEALS VIII** funding.

3. **Hygiene Materials, Lice Kits and Uniforms:** As in previous **HEALS** initiatives, student hygiene materials, lice kits and uniforms continue to present a significant need, particularly involving those students whose families are unable to afford the purchase of these items. Additionally, **HEALS VIII** provides for the purchase of loaner school uniforms for children who soil themselves during the school day.

5. **Medical & 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 VIII** initiative will be used to continue the dental care program which was implemented under **HEALS I** and has proven to be one of most impactful initiatives funded by Lincoln Health Foundation. The Dental Health objective in the **HEALS VIII** initiative consists of the following components:

A. **Dental Screenings.** **HEALS VIII** funding will provide for dental screenings to all third and 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. 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.

C. Medical Physician Visits & Prescription Medications. As in previous **HEALS** initiatives, funding will be provided to enable indigent student access to medical providers whenever a school nurse determines the need. In addition, funds for prescription medications will be provided as needed for indigent students who receive dental and medical treatment.

6. 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 VIII** funding will enable the continued employment of the mental health counselor procured through the **HEALS III** initiative. The mental health counselor has been used effectively since 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 VIII funds will be used to pay the counselor's salary, purchase supplies and assessment instruments, and provide professional development.

7. 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 VIII** funds will be utilized to fund the Coordinator's time managing and coordinating the **HEALS VIII** 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.
- 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.