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August 9, 2023

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## **Shapiro Administration Highlights Commitment to Health Access, Equity During Visit to York County's Only School-Based Health Center**



**York, PA – Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Dr. Val Arkoosh and Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) Acting Secretary Dr. Debra Bogen** joined representatives from Hannah Penn School, Family First Health (FFH), and the United Health Foundation today to discuss a shared commitment of improving health care access for underserved communities through school-based health centers. This event also marks National Health Center Week, which recognizes the important role community health centers play in meeting the diverse health and social service needs of communities they serve.

School-based health centers provide services like medical, behavioral, dental, and vision care directly in schools. The health centers are strategically located in communities with higher rates of Medicaid recipients and services provided are supported by DHS' Medicaid managed care organizations. Health centers embedded in schools, including the one located within the Hannah Penn School, are a powerful tool for easing barriers to care and achieving health equity among children in Pennsylvania. By locating a health center in a nontraditional space that is down the hall from its patients, this critical safety net can ensure that students have access to care when they need it.

"As a physician, I worked with families whose health was negatively impacted by the lack of access to health care and other essential services. This is a complex issue, and I am thrilled to be here with partners in health care, government, and education to be a part of the solution,"

said **Secretary Arkoosh**. “Family First Health’s school-based health center is working to reduce barriers for families by providing critically needed services directly in school so that all young people, no matter their zip code, have equal opportunity to learn and grow.”

“As a pediatrician, I’ve seen first-hand how school-based health clinics help children who otherwise may have gaps in their healthcare get the medical, behavioral, dental and vision services they need,” said **Acting Secretary of Health Dr. Debra Bogen**. “During National Health Center week, it is important to showcase how clinics such as Family First Health work to bridge the health equity divide and create a healthier Pennsylvania for all.”

Family First Health’s school-based health center, the only such center in York County, received \$2 million in grant funding from the United Health Foundation in 2020. The additional funds allowed Family First Health to significantly expand their primary care offerings, including behavioral health care and wellness services. The school-based center’s resources are available to students, their families, and the greater York community. The grant also funds health navigators who connect families to additional social services and provide home visits where needed. Family First Health’s Hannah Penn Center is one of DHS’ trusted community partners in helping spread the word about Medicaid renewals. The health center employs Community Health Workers who provide families with renewal information and assist with their Medicaid renewals.

“The United Health Foundation and Family First Health partnership has created incredible community impact across York,” said **Blair Boroch, CEO, UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Pennsylvania**. “Nearly 2,000 families have been engaged in wellness programs at Hannah Penn’s school-based health center, and students now have expanded access to primary care and behavioral health screenings. Community health workers are also providing in-home support to families, helping individuals manage chronic conditions, and screening and providing referrals to social supports.

“The team at FFH is so pleased to welcome Secretaries Arkoosh and Bogen to our health center location at Hannah Penn K – 8 School. In a school-based location, we are uniquely able to deliver on our mission of improving lives by addressing the root causes of health disparities. With partners like UnitedHealth Foundation, we have been able to expand our programs and services at the school to provide much-needed care for our community. National Health Center Week is the ideal time to highlight the impact of this model. We believe there is no more important time to work closely with schools and families to improve health and are grateful for the opportunity to share our work.”

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