



CDC Healthy Schools Stories of Achievement

Healthy Students, Ready to Learn

MASSACHUSETTS

Collaborating to address mental health needs,

food assistance, and access to the COVID-19 vaccine for staff, students, and families

Two Massachusetts school districts illustrate the importance of building relationships in the community to improve health and well-being of school staff, students, and families.

Brockton Public Schools focuses on community and family engagement to support mental health

According to a recent COVID-19 Community Impact Survey administered by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, from September 2020 through November 2020, almost half of all young people in Massachusetts reported poor mental health. This number is 21% higher than what was reported in the 2017 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey. The Community Impact Survey showed that poor mental health among adults had tripled during the pandemic compared to what was reported in the 2019 Massachusetts Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

The Brockton Healthy Schools Team, formed in February 2021, saw the extreme need for mental health resources and wellness support for students, parents, and other community members. As the Brockton Public Schools district navigated the challenges of remote learning, the wellness team began to research and vet resources, specifically mental health and food assistance resources, to share in the resource guide it was developing. This team partnered with Pinnacle Partnerships, a technical assistance provider for Massachusetts grantees, to produce a website resource with direct links to organizations and other communication products for the resource guide, and a print version of the guide to be shared with schools, community partners, and families. The *Brockton Resource Area Guide* project demonstrates the value of having a district-wide focus and highlights the importance of collaboration and partnership building.



“The Healthy Schools grant has been key in fostering new relationships both within our school district and among community partners. Our work with Pinnacle Partnerships is just beginning, and we look forward to deepening our work together to serve the needs of Brockton.”

– **Dennis Geniuch, MEd,**
Director of Wellness K-12 for
Brockton Public Schools

COVID-19 Community Impact Survey

administered by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health
September 2020–November 2020



Almost half of all youth in Massachusetts reported **poor mental health**

21% higher than the 2017 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance



Poor mental health among adults **tripled** during the pandemic



Holyoke Public Schools partners with the Holyoke Health Center to improve employee wellness with health education and a COVID-19 vaccine clinic

COVID-19 vaccination is essential to stopping the pandemic and a safe way to help build protection for school staff, students, families, and the community. To help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in schools and make it easier for school staff to get vaccinated, Holyoke Public Schools partnered with the Holyoke Health Center to provide an onsite vaccine clinic. The clinic took place on March 17 and April 24, 2021. School nurses helped with the forms, intake, and monitoring after the vaccine, while Holyoke Health Center staff administered the vaccine. Music was playing (“Hit Me with Your Best Shot”), and staff received wristbands and stickers that read “COVID vaccinated.”

During the onsite COVID-19 vaccine clinic, 560 school staff were fully vaccinated. The number of COVID-19 cases among staff decreased to zero in the 2 months after the vaccination clinic. In addition, the vaccine clinic gave staff the opportunity to have conversations about the vaccine. At first, staff were reluctant and hesitant to receive the vaccine. However, with education (e.g., sharing resources and educational messages from the CDC COVID-19 website and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) and the onsite vaccine clinics, staff began to open up and feel more comfortable. They began to educate their peer groups about the importance of getting the vaccine.

In another collaborative effort, Holyoke Public Schools and Holyoke Health Center offered two onsite COVID-19 vaccine clinics for students and community members aged 12 and older. They continued to plan COVID-19 vaccination clinics and had 9 additional COVID-19 clinics scheduled in March 2022 for students aged 5 or older and their families, and a COVID-19 booster clinic at Holyoke High School. They will also continue to use CDC and Massachusetts resources and tools to raise awareness about the importance of COVID-19 vaccinations in reducing the spread of COVID-19 and creating a healthier school environment. The Healthy Schools funding in Holyoke made initiatives such as this possible.



“It’s about the relationships. Holyoke Health Center and Holyoke Public Schools have built strong working relationships based on the shared desire to positively impact our community. When we work as a team, our community benefits!”

– **Cynthia Carbone,**
*Director of Health, Wellness, and
Nursing at Holyoke Public Schools*