



# School-based health center opening in Montville High

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Montville — Students at Montville High School soon won't need to go far to find medical care.

United Community & Family Services (<http://www.ucfs.org/>) is opening a school-based health center at the high school in August that will offer primary care and behavioral health services.

Montville schools Director of Public Services Mark Johnson said the hope is that the center will lessen the time students spend away from school for medical reasons and will provide care to students who may be in the position of looking for health care without the aid of their parents.

"You find the kinds of things that a health center can provide for kids are more appropriate for a high school at this point," he said, adding that he hopes the district can eventually add such a program at other schools.

Construction of the center will begin in a room near the front entrance on June 18, according to UCFS Vice President of Marketing & Facilities Pamela Kinder. The transformation of the room, which previously served as a copy room, is the only cost borne by the district, she said. UCFS will bill insurance for treatment it provides and otherwise cover its own costs.

UCFS has another center at Norwich Technical High School, according to Kinder. She said other Norwich schools also have centers, as do some schools in New London, though those centers are not run by UCFS. UCFS also runs a mobile dental program for youths that stops in Montville as well as other area towns.

Students seeking medical attention at Montville High still will first go to the school nurse, according to Kinder. If the school nurse cannot provide the services that the student needs, the student can then visit the advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) or behavioral health clinician at the health center.

The center will be able to offer services typically available at a primary care provider and, in fact, center staff can serve as the primary care provider for students. The nurse at the center can provide vaccines, conduct physicals, perform tests such as for strep throat, and so on. The behavioral health clinician will provide mental health services.

Johnson noted that sports teams typically require physicals, a procedure some families have difficulty accessing. Students who don't get physicals don't just suffer in terms of their health, he said, but also can't play on sports teams requiring physicals. For a talented athlete, that could mean the loss of a scholarship, he explained.

He noted that the majority of students upon graduation will be responsible for getting themselves to a doctor, so it doesn't hurt for them to practice while they're still in high school.

Kinder said the center can conduct first visits with students with verbal approval from parents or guardians, but that written approval is needed thereafter. Emancipated students are the exception to this rule. Parents and guardians can find the permission form and additional information on the Montville High School website (<http://www.montvilleschools.org/page.cfm?p=959>).

The center is tentatively slated to be open at the school from 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays starting when classes begin in late August.

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