



Muskegon High to host teen health clinic

By [Lynn Moore | The Muskegon Chronicle](#)

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MUSKEGON -- A teen health clinic to serve students is expected to open at Muskegon High School this summer.

Hackley Community Care Center is planning to open the medical, dental and mental health clinic inside the school's freshmen wing, known as the "J Building," in time for sports physicals this August.

"The teen health center is another effort at keeping kids in school," said Muskegon High Principal Dave Lewis. "Healthy bodies and healthy minds will promote more successful students."

Helping the effort are federal matching funds that bring in \$2.70 for every dollar that is donated to the center, said Linda Juarez, executive director of Hackley Community Care.

The effort still needs \$60,000 to renovate a former shop classroom into the clinic and purchase some medical equipment, Juarez said. A federal Safe Schools Healthy Students grant is expected to help purchase more than \$100,000 in furnishings and equipment while the Muskegon Community Foundation and other donors have been approached for financial help.

Juarez said interest has been boosted by the prospect of federal matching funds. "It's going to happen," Juarez said. "I'm very confident."

Once the clinic is constructed, Hackley Community Care will cover the costs of operating it with billings for services, primarily to Medicaid. Hackley Community Care operates a large medical and dental clinic in Muskegon Heights and is "federally qualified" to receive higher reimbursement amounts than typical health providers.

"We're outreaching to the community and the highest-risk kids," Juarez said. "Shame on us if we don't reach them in some way because the risk factors are there." For example, she said 12 percent of girls at Muskegon High -- about 80 students -- either have children or are pregnant. While the school-based clinic won't be able to hand out contraceptives, staff there can discuss birth control options and help students access them at the Muskegon Heights clinic, Juarez said.

She said she expects to serve 1,000 young people ages 10 to 21 with the school clinic that will be open year-round. Services will include immunizations, health screenings, sports physicals, dental care, nutrition information and mental health counseling. Muskegon Public Schools Superintendent Colin Armstrong called the health center "fabulous." "I think it will get tremendous use," he said. "This makes access to health care easier, simpler and faster."

Hackley Community Care likely will staff the center with a physician assistant and registered nurse while a pediatrician would be available for oversight, Juarez said. Other community agencies,

including the Muskegon County mental health department, will contribute staff and services, she said.

"The great thing for me about this particular model is there's a long list of community agencies that are interested in doing their work at that site," Juarez said.

Bids for renovating the school classroom are expected to be sought soon, with construction starting in June, Juarez said. The area has an exterior entrance, making it a good choice for a clinic, officials said.

Hackley Community Care Center received a \$50,000 state grant to study the feasibility of placing a child and adolescent health clinic in the Muskegon and Muskegon Heights school districts.

The study found ample need and support for school-based health centers in both communities, Juarez said. Planning for a school clinic in Muskegon Heights had started, but now is on "indefinite hold" while the district addresses other priorities, Juarez said.

"The need is great," she said. "The need is still there."

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