

Health Opportunity Partnership Empowerment

The Institute for H.O.P.E.™ is a catalyst of change for our health, neighborhoods, economy and future.



John Yousef, a veteran advanced practice registered nurse with the School Health Program, examines a patient during a back-to-school clinic.

*About 80% of a person's health depends on factors beyond the hospital walls. Here's how the **Institute for H.O.P.E.™** – in particular, the team's School Health Program – is addressing the disparities that prevent far too many children from receiving the care they need.*

For the MetroHealth School Health Program team, a school parking lot is as good a place as any to see patients.

“Our goal is to meet our patients where they are, and for five days a week, that is at a school,” says Katie Davis, MSN, RN, PHNA-BC, Director, Center for Health Outreach, Access & Prevention at MetroHealth. “A visit to the doctor's office can mean a caregiver missing work, a student missing school, or both. We are removing that obstacle for so many families.”

By bringing MetroHealth's providers and the School Health Program mobile unit to schools throughout Cuyahoga County, children who might otherwise have difficulty connecting with a medical professional can get the care they need, including physicals, chronic disease management, immunizations, mental health screenings and the like. The School Health Program also functions as an added layer of expertise for districts and their school nurses.

“They're always just a phone call away,” says Carol Pennington, MSN, RN, LSN, Interim Director of Nursing and Health Services at the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. “MetroHealth is part of our team.”

Health and education are closely linked. Research suggests that healthy students are more likely to attend school and ultimately graduate. In fact,

MetroHealth's own data shows that students served by the School Health Program have greater access to primary care, fewer emergency room visits, fewer absences, and better grades.

Partnership is at the core of the School Health Program's work – partnerships anchored in trust with schools, students and their families. It also means working with other organizations in Cleveland to address all factors that could impact student health, including access to safe housing, food insecurity, legal concerns and more.

That holistic approach to student health is what Nancy Pepler most appreciates about MetroHealth's partnership with the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District. The MetroHealth team staffs a clinic at the district's high school and its mobile unit visits the elementary and middle schools.

“At the core of our relationship with MetroHealth is partnership,” says Pepler, the district's Supervisor of Community and School Partnerships. “They've been able to develop such a strong partnership with our nurses and the social workers in our buildings to serve our students.”

For example, if a student's asthma is being triggered by unhealthy living conditions, the School Health Program team might connect the family with an agency that supplies housing assistance

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or the Legal Aid Society of Greater Cleveland to work with the landlord.

In many cases, the **Institute for H.O.P.E.**™ connects students and their families with resources through Unite Ohio, the coordinated care network of more than 130 health and social service agencies that launched last year. Common referrals include the Greater Cleveland Food Bank for meal assistance and the Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging for utility and rental support.

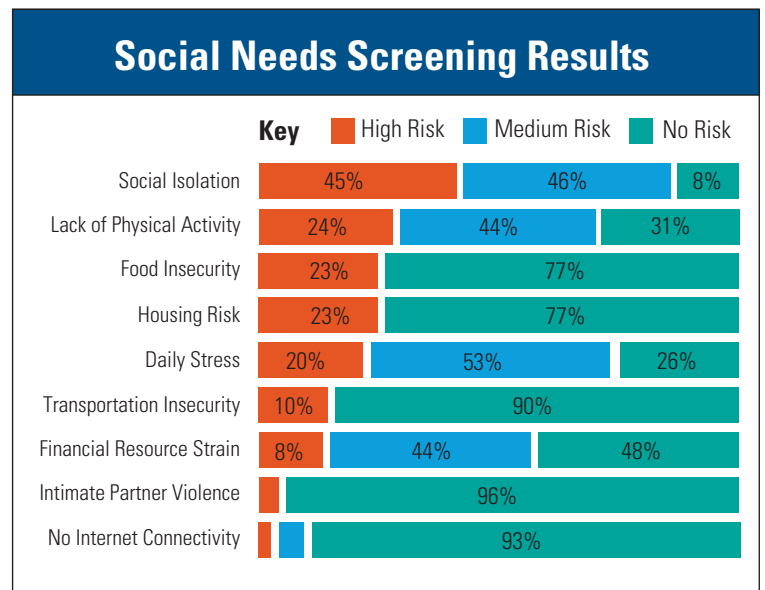
“Whole child, whole community – that is exactly what the School Health Program is about,” Davis says. “It takes all of us working together to build a healthier future for our community’s youth.”

In many ways, the COVID-19 pandemic deepened the disparities the School Health Program was designed to address. As such, it’s taken on a leading role in the community during the pandemic to ensure districts and their leaders have the resources they need to make the best decisions for their staffs and students.

For example, MetroHealth’s Vanessa Maier, MD, MPH, serves as the COVID-19 Medical Director for Breakthrough Schools – a network of high-performing charter schools in Cleveland. In this role, Dr. Maier offers guidance on safety protocols, contact tracing and the like to Breakthrough’s leadership. Dr. Maier has become a trusted voice nationally during the pandemic through her work with the ABC Science Collaborative, a national consortium of medical and education leaders committed to keeping staff and students safe amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Having her as a resource has been a huge asset,” said Tyler Thornton, Breakthrough Schools’ Chief Operating Officer. “We’re not figuring this all out on our own.”

From July 1, 2021 – September 30, 2021, we screened 6,048 patients for social determinants of health, bringing our total to 58,629. With these responses, we’re able to better assess the needs of our patients and connect them with the services they need to improve their overall health.



Unite Ohio at a glance:

In 2020, MetroHealth partnered with Unite Us to build Unite Ohio – a coordinated care network of health and social care providers. To learn more, visit ohio.uniteus.com.

	Jan - Mar	Apr - June	Jul-Sep
Community Organizations in the network	72	91	133
Registered users to make referrals	409	681	761
Referrals created	991	1,992	1,773
Unique individuals served	625	1,313	1,106