



# LINCOLN HEALTH FOUNDATION

*Improving Health Care and Outcomes for Residents of Lincoln Parish*

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<b>Initiative:</b>	Healthier Outcomes & Access to Health Care
<b>Project Name:</b>	Health Enterprise to Assist Lincoln's Students (HEALS III)
<b>Funding Period:</b>	January 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011
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<b>Project Coordinator:</b>	Sonja Cardwell, RN, Lincoln Parish School Board
<b>Project Administration:</b>	Lincoln Parish School Board
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<b>Project Status:</b>	Completed

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## Program Summary

Lincoln Parish School Board **HEALS** is a health initiative designed to meet basic safety needs of indigent students in Lincoln Parish. Indigent students are defined in the proposal as those whose family income level qualifies them to receive free or reduced lunches, as defined by the State of Louisiana. Because of the high poverty rate in Lincoln Parish, many students meet these qualifications. Many of these students and their families have health issues which are not addressed by government programs. These issues include poor personal hygiene habits, dental problems, and difficulties accessing health care facilities and providers due to lack of transportation. The Lincoln Parish School Board **HEALS** initiative addresses these problems by bringing the following resources to bear in the two Lincoln Parish elementary schools with the highest poverty levels (94% and 92% of the children meet the definition of indigent):

The Lincoln Parish School Board **HEALS III** (Health Enterprise to Assist Lincoln's Students) initiative will benefit students as follows:

1. **School Nurses.** Two school nurses will be hired on a contract basis. School nurses attend to the needs of students at nineteen schools. Three nurses divide their time among the schools, and the fourth nurse will be based at Glen View Elementary School (FRL=61.99%).

2. **School Nurse's Equipment.** Because of HEALS funds, school nurses are now able to maintain supplies at all nineteen of our school facilities. Though some funds are budgeted each year to purchase materials for nurses' stations, district monetary constraints continue to prohibit our maintaining appropriate and sometimes even adequate supplies at these locations without assistance. When necessary, school nurses purchase needed materials from their own resources. Funds from this program would supplement, not supplant, our current resources in this area, providing necessary nursing supplies for every school.

Approximately 60% of students in Lincoln Parish Schools qualify to participate in the free/reduced lunch program, with specific numbers ranging from 93.83% at Ruston Elementary to 0.00% at A. E. Phillips. Thirteen of the nineteen schools have FRLs above 60%. Purchased equipment will include fingertip pulse oximeters (portable blood oxygen meter), otoscopes (for viewing throats and ears), blood pressure cuff (to help monitor students with blood pressure issues), a laptop computer for the new nurse (to enable him/her to file reports on-site), ear check monitors to accurate identification of ear infections, a flow meter for managing asthma patients, and a desktop computer to be placed at the central office for use by all nurses.

**3. Nurse Station Supplies.** Supplies to be purchased will include lockable procedure carts for placement in four schools, recovery cots for seventeen schools, blankets, pillows, multiple sizes and types of bandages, Flexi-wrap, Nosebudds, gauze, cold packs, tape, gauze sponges, butterfly closures, disposable gloves, thermometers, thermometer covers, plastic cups, medicine dispenser cups, Steri-strips, zipper bags, hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes, burn dressings, earache medicine, sterile wash, eye wash, multiple sizes of splints, over-the-counter medications (to be distributed only to a parent or guardian) like Tylenol, Neosporin, hydrocortisone cream, anti-fungal cream, poison ivy cream, and itch reliever. In addition, we will use a portion of the funds to purchase prescription medications which are not covered by Medicaid. Again, these medications would be given only to the parent or guardian of the child in need. The purchase of these materials will enhance our nurses' ability to treat minor injuries which frequently occur to young children at schools. Without these materials, indigent children especially might never receive treatment for these types of wounds.

**4. Nursing Software:** Our nurses will be able to input medical data on students into our Student Data Management System through the purchase of JHealth. Health issues can be recorded to prevent misdiagnosis or overtreatment. All personal information remains secure.

**5. Educational Supplies.** Each year nurses are responsible for the training of parents and staff in various health issues. Funds will be used to purchase aids for these lessons. Additionally, some parents need hands-on materials to help them understand health problems their children may be facing, especially dermatological issues. Funds will purchase DVDs for health education, medical textbooks, and teaching aids.

**6. Prescription Medication:** At times, students who are receiving dental treatment may be given a prescription for medicine to eliminate an infection or reduce pain. Funds will be used to purchase these medications if the family is unable to afford its cost.

**7. Medical Physical Visits:** Funds will be used to provide physician services to indigent and those without a viable Medicaid card, a problem faced by many ESL students.

**8. Hygiene Materials.**

**A. Personal Hygiene Kits.** Many students are not given proper instruction in maintaining an appropriate level of personal hygiene. To address this problem, we propose once again to create hygiene kits which will contain deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrush, shampoo, and soap, as well as feminine hygiene products for the girls. Last year, HEALS distributed 394 of these hygiene kits to high-needs students in 7 different schools. The availability of these kits greatly increases the hygiene habits of indigent children and thereby increase their social skills.

**B. Washer & Dryer.** Funds will be used to purchase a washer and dryer to clean the clothes of indigent students who come to school in soiled clothing or who soil themselves while at school.

**C. Washing Powder.** Funds will be used to purchase cleaning powder for use in schools with a high indigent population.

**D. Lice Kits.** Nurses periodically screen for and discover lice among students. If lice are found on a child, they can probably also be found on other family members. However, some families cannot afford to purchase the products needed to rid themselves of these pests. A lice kit contains lice shampoo for the family as well as a Robi comb which kills the lice and eggs. Giving lice kits to the children as well as their families will reduce the reoccurrence of lice outbreaks within the schools. Last year, HEALS distributed 33 lice kits to indigent students and their families. In addition, nurses will be given Skin Scopes for lice and scabies detection.

**E. Extra Uniforms.** Children who accidentally soil themselves may not have an extra uniform at home or a parent who is able to bring another set to the school. Though most schools have a few used uniforms on hand (provided by parents or through donations), there are not enough to meet the needs of the students. Indigent students are more likely to have need of these extra uniforms as their parents are least likely to be able to bring replacement uniforms to the school. In addition, having extra uniforms on hand eliminates the need to isolate children whose parents are unable or unwilling to bring a change of clothes to the school. For this reason, we plan to place extra uniforms in various sizes within each high-need elementary and middle school. Multiple sizes and sets are needed as uniforms which are loaned to students are frequently not returned. Our plan, however, is to clean and reuse these uniforms throughout the school year. Last year, HEALS provided 26 uniform sets to students in two schools. These extra uniforms allow students to preserve their dignity, protecting their mental health and allowing them to maintain the respect of their peers.

**9. Dental Health.** For many reasons, indigent children often suffer from poor dental health, and their problems may become compounded with neglect over time. We plan to continue the dental care program begun during HEALS' inaugural year.

**A. Dental Screenings.** We will offer dental screenings to all third graders in Lincoln Parish, including those at A. E. Phillips, Bethel Christian, and Cedar Creek. The HEALS Coordinator will contact area dental hygienists to work with our school nurses and perform brief dental examinations to determine problem areas or potential problems. These screenings will be helpful both in detecting dental problems and in preventing them. Last year, HEALS provided screenings for 365 third graders, revealing 129 students needing dental treatment. Without screenings, nurses and school personnel do not become aware of children's dental problems until students come to the office and complain of pain. By that time, the problem is usually quite severe and requires greater expense to correct. Using the same form which was created last year, we will notify parents of the dental screenings and offer them the option, by returning the form checked and signed, to refuse to participate. By providing dental screenings to all third graders in the parish, we believe that we will be able to identify correctable dental problems or potential problems and help children better understand the need for proper dental hygiene, knowledge which will benefit them throughout

their lives. Dental screenings could benefit approximately 500 third graders annually.

**B. Vouchers for Visits to Dentists.** Indigent students who have a nurse-confirmed dental problem will be allotted a nontransferable voucher which will pay for a visit to a local dentist to correct cavities, abscesses, or similar problems. As mentioned above, last year's dental screenings indicated that 35% of those who were screened needed dental treatment. Though indigent students are usually eligible for Medicaid, which pays for dental care, only one dentist in the area accepts Medicaid payments. As a result, he is very busy and getting an appointment with him is challenging. By providing vouchers for visits to other dentists, we will reduce classroom interruptions by students who are in pain, reduce absenteeism caused by illnesses brought on by infections in the mouth, and provide dental treatments for students who would probably not receive necessary care to eliminate problems with their teeth. Our HEALS Coordinator will use the same voucher system which has proved so successful in previous years. Indigent students who report mouth pain or those whose screenings reveal the need for a trip to the dentist will be referred to the school nurse who will verify that they meet the indigent qualifications. At that point, the HEALS Coordinator will be contacted to verify that funds are available. If the Coordinator approves the expenditure, the nurse or other school official will contact the child's parent or guardian, explain their concern for the child, and make arrangements for the parent to get a voucher to a participating dentist. Last year, HEALS paid for 217 dental visits. The HEALS Coordinator will remain in contact with each dentist, and should necessary treatments exceed \$500, the Coordinator must approve of the expenditure before treatment is rendered.

**10. Mental Health.** Many of our students would benefit from the services of a professional counselor, social worker, psychologist, or psychiatrist. Some students suffer from behavioral problems due to substance abuse by their parents during pregnancy. Some have behavioral problems because of familial issues which have affected them, and acting out is their way of coping with the situation.

**A. Play Therapy.** Cypress Springs currently has Lisa Trussell (L.P.C., L.M.F.T.), a licensed family counselor who devotes two or more hours each day to counseling services for the children in her school. She uses play therapy to counsel students and provide diagnostic services for those who need more in-depth counseling services. Some funds would be used to equip a play therapy room in Cypress Springs.

**B. Psychologist/Counselor.** Getting to the root of the behavioral problem benefits the child, the family, and the child's peers as there will be fewer disruptions in learning. For students who suffer from any of the problems listed below (identified by their teacher, school counselor, or school nurse), we propose to hire a licensed psychologist or counselor, thereby providing greater access to immediate mental health assistance. This psychologist will work with the district's Pupil Appraisal Office, assisting high-need students throughout the district in any of the following areas.

- Social Skills like working as a team, giving and gaining respect, connecting with others appropriately, making social groups, and making and keeping friends. Social Skills includes hygiene and social interaction issues.

- Attachment Disorders. Frequently indigent children, for a variety of reasons (such as parental abandonment), have problems attaching to adults or others.
- Anger Management
- Depression
- Substance Abuse
- Family Issues. For students who have problems with their parents or oppositional defiance
- Social Work Issues like getting students involved in extra-curricular activities, tutoring, or anything else that will help them cope better with their issues
- Academic Counseling
- Isolation Issues
- Trust Issues
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Issues

Funds will be used to pay the salary, equip and office, and provide assessment instruments and professional development for this psychologist, who will be hired on a contract basis and employed only as long as the grant is extant.

## 11. Visual Health.

**A. Vision Screening.** Our school district is responsible for providing vision screenings for prekindergarten students. The local Lions Club provides a service which screens prekindergarten students for eye tumors. Because some correctable vision problems must be detected and treated early, complete prekindergarten vision screenings are vital. Additionally, some vision problems do not manifest themselves until the child is older. For these reasons, we want to provide our nurses with the equipment they need to make accurate assessments of students' visual acuity. Once a need has been determined, qualified students are able to receive glasses through Medicaid. However, children tend to lose or break their glasses, and there is a limit to how many Medicaid will provide.

**B. Optometrist.** Some students don't qualify for vision help through Medicaid. Using the established voucher system and local optometrists who will accept our vouchers as payment, we will set aside funds to pay for exams, frames, and lenses for these students.

## 12. Other Personnel & Services

**A. Transportation.** Providing nontransferable vouchers to pay for visits to dentists, optometrists, and counselors do not help a family that is unable to pay for transportation to and from these facilities. Therefore, we propose to continue providing nontransferable vouchers which will pay for transportation services for the child and a parent or guardian. Using the transportation network and voucher system established last year, we believe we are eliminating any excuse for not aiding a student in need.

**B. Discipline Coordinator/Notification.** Recognizing a need in a student is the first step in addressing that need. The next step is contacting the parent or guardian of that child. Often, a parent cannot be contacted during school hours, and young children are not mature enough to carry home vouchers and explain their use to their parents. Therefore, we propose to use funds to pay the after-hours' expenses of the Lincoln Parish School Board Discipline Coordinator (or one of his representatives) who will travel to the child's home and, in a face-to-face meeting

with the parent, explain the nontransferable voucher system and its benefits. If the parent or guardian remains unable or unwilling to use the voucher system, the Discipline Coordinator will attempt to work with the parent/guardian to make other arrangements so that the child will receive the medical attention s/he needs. Only in extreme cases and as a last resort will an employee of Lincoln Parish Schools offer to act *in loco parentis*. By continuing the use of this notification system, we believe we are eliminating any excuse for not aiding a student in need.

**C. HEALS Coordinators.** The Lincoln Parish School Board HEALS Coordinator at the central office will be Sonja Cardwell, a school nurse who is familiar with the specific problems of indigent children in Lincoln Parish Schools. Should the need arise, she will share her responsibilities with Debbie Young, another school nurse. The Coordinator's job will again be multi-faceted and consist of the following responsibilities:

- Continue to work with Lincoln Health Foundation members to strengthen the network of hygienists, dentists, counselors, optometrists, and transportation providers who will accept our vouchers and assist our indigent students.
- Improve the voucher system used last year as needed.
- Purchase the materials, supplies, and equipment; assemble the hygiene and lice kits; and distribute kits and supplies to the schools.
- Purchase extra school uniforms and distribute them to the schools.
- Serve as the contact person for the other school nurses and principals who desire to refer a student for any of the above services.
- Maintain accurate records of the numbers of students impacted in each area, the amount of money spent in each area, and anecdotal records which reveal program successes as well as areas of weakness.
- Keep track of the funds of the program and submit quarterly reports to the Lincoln Health Foundation.
- Decide how best to transfer these funds and submit to the Lincoln Health Foundation a formal written request for a budget revision, explaining the need for the transfer and a revised budget, should additional funds be required in any area.