

## **Clinics make a difference for kids**

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Jenny recently moved to Iowa City with her mother, sister and brother. They moved here quickly, with only one thought -- getting to a safe place. Jenny's mother is trying very hard to rebuild her life and provide a safe home for her children, but this has been a challenge. They have come to live with a friend temporarily until they can make long-term plans. Her friend talked about the many opportunities in Iowa City and the excellent school system, and Jenny's mother thinks that this might be a good place for her family to make their home.

Jenny has severe asthma and she uses an inhaler for exacerbations. Unfortunately, the inhaler that she brought with her is almost empty. Jenny's brother has ADHD for which he takes Ritalin, but only gets one month's supply at a time. The family does have Medicaid from another state, but it does not cover them in Iowa and Jenny's mother is reluctant to apply for Iowa Medicaid because she is concerned that her whereabouts would be discovered by her husband. Jenny's asthma has been flaring up with the change in the weather, and she needs a refill on her inhaler. Without his Ritalin, Jenny's brother is having difficulty focusing on his school work and his behavior is causing disruption at school. The teachers of these two children talk to the principal and school nurse about their observations and concerns. The school nurse contacts Jenny's mother to tell her about the Healthy Kids Community Care school-based health clinic.

The nurse tells her that this clinic provides free health services to any student in the Iowa City Community School District who is uninsured, underinsured or without a primary health care provider, and Jenny's mother quickly agrees to appointments for the children at the clinic the next day. The children are evaluated and prescribed the necessary medication, which they are able to obtain from a local pharmacy at a very low cost. Jenny's mother is put in contact with a DHS worker to discuss how to apply for Iowa Medicaid without putting her safety in jeopardy. Jenny's mother is not only grateful for the assistance with her children's health needs, but also relieved that such an accessible service exists for future use if needed.

Because of the community support and enthusiasm for Healthy Kids school-based clinics, children are able to receive the health care they need and are able to attend school consistently ready to learn. By partnering with the United Way of Johnson County, Mercy Iowa City, ACT Inc., University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, University of Iowa Colleges of Dentistry, Medicine and Nursing, Visiting Nurses Association and Johnson County Public Health, the Iowa City Community School District is able to provide free and accessible medical and dental services to ICCSD students and their younger siblings.

For continued sustainability, Mercy Iowa City has developed an endowment fund with Community Foundation of Johnson County. To contribute to Healthy Kids Community Care, please contact United Way of Johnson County or the Community Foundation of Johnson County.