



The current situation of the GJHS school-based health clinic: Will It Happen?

With the construction of the new GJHS, the topic of a potential SBHC has ruffled some feathers

Lila Mottram, Reporter

When the topic of having a school-based health clinic (SBHC) in the new Grand Junction High School came up at a recent school board meeting, not everyone was on board with the idea.

Colorado has 70 school-based health centers, eight of which are on the Western Slope; 44 serve high schools, 23 middle schools, 22 elementary schools, and eight early childhood centers. One of these clinics is located at Central High School in Grand Junction, operated by Merillac Health.

There is space designated for an SBHC in the new \$145 million GJHS building that is already under construction and due to open in Fall 2024. Merillac Health would also operate that clinic.

At a Mesa Valley School District 51 meeting on Feb. 22, board members discussed the potential health clinic at Grand Junction High School. The meeting allowed citizen comments on the matter.

A school-based health center would provide healthcare within the school to students. That could include Covid tests, temperature checks, well-child exams, strep tests, and dental health screenings.

Despite these offers, many citizens of Grand Junction are concerned about the idea of a SBHC because it wasn't specifically on the original ballot to fund the new high school and it could be detrimental to current family doctors in the area.

However, at the board meeting, pediatrician Dr. Michael Pramenko stated that he "welcome this alternative to [their] clinics." He said that this is about our kids, not our business.

"Even kids who feel they have a great relationship with their parents need another trusted adult in their life," said another pediatrician who spoke at the meeting, Dr. Lora Campbell.

Multiple high school students from GJHS and Central High School also spoke at the board meeting. Some Central students shared their stories about how their school-based health clinic was able to help them with both mental and physical illnesses.

One student from Central even pointed out that there has not been a single completed suicide at Central since the opening of the health clinic.

From GJHS, students shared that they see classmates in the hallways and can see the need for this clinic.

On the other hand, many parents expressed concerns about not being aware of the treatments their children receive from the clinic.



Serenity Schmidt

Construction continues on the new Grand Junction High School building that is scheduled to open in Fall 2024. While there is space designated for a school-based health clinic, some are now opposed to the idea.

However, multiple Central students stated that their parents signed a consent form before their student was able to receive care from the clinic and that their parents were always one phone call away every time they visited the clinic.

Michelle Smith, a parent of a GJHS student, even pointed out that she hasn't "heard any Central parents come forward upset with the care their child received."

Whether or not the new Grand Junction High School will get a school-based health clinic is still undecided, but the District 51 school board will need to vote on the official decision in March due to construction timelines