

For many years, a group of concerned Nanaimo area health professionals, educators and community agencies collaborated with the intent of bringing accessible relevant health services to school-based youth, particularly those considered high-risk.

In September 2015, the first secondary school wellness centre (John Barsby Wellness Centre - JBWC) was opened in Nanaimo with the goal of providing primary care services (particularly mental health supports) to students. One of the founders of this clinic is Dr. Wilma Arruda, the Advocacy Chair of the BC Pediatric Society. Subsequent to this a wellness centre was opened at the Belmonte Secondary School in Victoria, as well as JBWC outreach services to Nanaimo and District Secondary School in Nanaimo.

The wellness centre models are consistent with provincial and local strategies to improve the wellness of school based populations and to enhance the educational attainment of BC students. For example, Growing Up in BC 2015 confirms that comprehensive school health programs are important to promoting healthy eating and active living among children and youth in schools. In addition, children and youth with strong connections to school are less likely to experience a wide range of risky behaviours and negative outcomes. As well, wellness centres are functioning as primary care medical homes for this vulnerable population.

The wellness centres at Barsby and Belmonte are currently being evaluated by the Health System Transformation and Sustainability (IHSTS).

The BC Pediatric Society is actively engaging with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction, the Ministry of Child and Family Development, and the Ministry of Health to encourage establishment of school based wellness clinics throughout the Province.

How Are Pediatricians Engaging with Schools?

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