



Forest Grove student health center opens

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Students in Forest Grove have a new place to turn for medical care.

The Forest Grove School-Based Health Center is a partnership between the Forest Grove School District, the Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center, several regional health insurance carriers and state and county agencies.

The center opened Thursday morning.

Set up in a modular building near Forest Grove High School, the center is there to serve students from the Forest Grove and Gaston school districts for their health concerns.

Nearly \$700,000 in funds was raised, ensuring the district had no financial commitment other than the space for the center and coverage of maintenance costs. More than half of that came from a Washington County Community Development Grant.

Tuality HealthCare, Cisco Systems, Legacy Health, Mountain States Networking and Providence all donated equipment, furnishings and supplies.

"It's just been an amazing partnership," said school district spokeswoman Connie Potter.

Students who want to visit the center can go during or after school hours - it's open on school days, from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Parents will be notified if students leave class to go to the center.

Because of privacy laws, parents of children 15 years and older do not have to give permission for the students to seek treatment.

"Every time a student comes to the center, they'll be asked to call their parents to get insurance information and to have communication with the parents," Potter said.

The center will be self-supporting, operated by Virginia Garcia and LifeWorks Northwest, which are charged with hiring and paying staff and billing students and their parents.

Students who have health insurance will be billed for treatment. If students don't have insurance, Potter said, staff will see if they're eligible for the Oregon Health Plan. If not, a fee is assessed based on their household's income. The minimum cost for treatment will be \$15.

"We know from research that healthy kids learn better," Potter said. "If we can keep students healthy and in school, they learn better and achieve better. It's an academic issue as well as a health issue."