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New Evaluation Shows SMART™ Model for Student Health and Wellness Revolutionizes Health Care in Public Schools to Support Academic Outcomes

The SMART™ model delivers innovation where public school students need it most, a white paper released today shows.

(Washington, DC) In a presentation today to Members of Congress, corporate leaders, and education and health care professionals, Dr. Liza Cariaga-Lo released new research (as a Formative Evaluation) that shows that the public-private partnership SMART™ Student Health and Wellness model could revolutionize health care in public schools. Cariaga-Lo, Vice President for Academic Development, Diversity and Inclusion at Brown University, reported on the first three years of SMART™’s flagship pilot program in urban Chicago. Her white paper indicated quantifiable and substantive improvements in educational and health outcomes for the public-school students.

Launched in 2013, the SMART™ model distinguishes itself from traditional school-based health care in significant ways. First, it focuses on academic outcomes as its purpose and is completely integrated into the educational environment. SMART™ staff work closely with educators and school administration to ensure they support the goals and needs of the students, functioning as an integral part of the school community. Second, SMART™ deploys what it calls an “active access” strategy to deliver “active care”—employing social workers and psychologists alongside physicians, nurse practitioners, and administrators to continuously and proactively reach out to and build relationships with students. This “whole child” lens addresses not only the physical health, but also the mental health and emotional well-being of students. Third, the SMART™ model is culturally responsive. With the Hispanic Heritage Foundation serving as an advisor, staff work to meet the unique needs of disadvantaged students and remove stigma and barriers to health care access and foster a culture of self-care. SMART™ was developed out of a private-public partnership between CVS Health, Ginn Group Consulting (the architects of the model), local school districts, and partner medical providers, making the model financially sustainable and scalable and providing better outcomes at lower costs.

The results are tangible. At Sullivan High School in Chicago, The SMART™ center replaced an existing, failing school-based health clinic four years ago. Since then, the population of students that receive health care has jumped to 85-90%, as opposed to the 15-20% usually seen by traditional models—a four-fold increase. Attendance has increased remarkably: more than 90% of students attend school regularly, with average absenteeism dropping from 36 days per year to 18 days per year, and disciplinary referrals also plummeted. The school’s principal has credited SMART™ with “being the key differentiator in helping to turning around a failing school; the SMART™ clinic was the primary differentiator for us in that process.” And because SMART™ was built with the flexibility to fit into any school environment, early results from diverse new sites in rural Alabama, in partnership with the University of Alabama and Whatley

Health Services, indicate these results are replicable and scalable in public districts across the country.

“CVS Health is proud to support the development of the SMART™ Student Health and Wellness model, which directly ties to our company’s purpose of helping people on their path to better health,” said David Casey, Chief Diversity Officer and Vice President of Workforce Strategies, CVS Health. “Through this innovative school health solution, we believe quality, accessible and cost effective care is within reach for students that need it most.”

“We are proud to partner on such an innovative effort with CVS Health, Ginn Group and the schools to improve the overall health of our student populations where they are—at school,” said Antonio Tijerino, President and CEO, Hispanic Heritage Foundation. “The SMART model will affect not only their health but every element associated with it from academics to attendance to self-esteem to socialization to future workforce possibilities. The impact is already being felt.”

“I want to thank the many disparate stakeholders who came together, willing to make changes that allowed for this true innovation,” said Melanie Ginn, President and CEO of Ginn Group Consulting. “The proof of concept we have now in the SMART approach and model shows that the trajectory of young lives can be positively supported when we break down silos between health and education and work together to swiftly design and deliver meaningful, lower-cost solutions.”

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SMART™ is a school health solution focused on student academic achievement through active access in the delivery of preventive and integrative physical and behavioral health with the goal of ensuring the wellness of every student in an educational setting. SMART™ is built on the proven connections between health, education, and workforce opportunity; its creation celebrates the powerful alliance of public-private partnerships that fueled this innovation.