

Healthy Schools

Connecting education, health, & community

2025 Evaluation Summary Report



Report Overview

This is the first formal outcome evaluation of the Deschutes County Healthy Schools program in Bend-La Pine Schools after four years of program development and implementation. The evaluation covers a period of time from the 2021-2022 school year through the 2024-2025 school year. This report focuses on a high-level summary of Healthy Schools' impact on select adolescent health outcomes: mental health, suicide, and substance use.


For a more in-depth report on the impact of Healthy Schools on adolescent health outcomes, please refer to the following linked websites:

[2025 Deschutes County Healthy Schools Outcome Evaluation: Analyzing the impact of Healthy Schools on adolescent health outcomes](#)

All of these reports can be found at: deschutes.org/healthyschools

“I've seen a lot of kids figure out like that they are having mental health problems and they need to get help, and how they can get help. It shows resources that they can go to. They made it more like eye opening, like they can talk to someone, the teen-to-teen line [YouthLine] and all that.”

- Sources of Strength* Peer Leader



*Sources of Strength is a suicide prevention program where student leaders, called Peer Leaders, create positive mental health activities in their school. Sources of Strength is one of the evidence-based prevention programs facilitated by Healthy Schools.

Healthy Schools Overview

Healthy Schools embeds County Public Health staff directly into the Bend-La Pine Schools in the district office and at middle and high schools to provide [essential public health services](#). Public Health staff serve as coordinators to ensure that schools promote health and prevent student health issues from ever starting or worsening. These staff do not take over the roles of school staff, but guide staff to use more effective practices.

Healthy Schools' staff serve as an extension of Deschutes County Prevention and Health Promotion to ensure prevention programs and practices are implemented in ways that remain effective in the school setting. Targeted adolescent health concerns are addressed such as suicide, mental health, substance use, bullying and violence, and sexual reproductive health.

[Schools are logical and efficient locations for public health interventions for youth](#). They are settings where learning is expected and new behaviors are learned and practiced daily. Children and adolescents spend nearly half of their waking hours at school for 13 years of their critical developmental years. More than 95% of youth ages 5-17 can be reached through schools.

The Deschutes County Healthy Schools program is a cost-sharing partnership between the County and Bend-La Pine Schools. Learn more about the program at [our website](#).

Evaluation Conclusions

Results from the Healthy Schools evaluation provide substantial evidence that the program prevented 21% of behavioral health-related Emergency Department (ED) visits for ages 11-17 living in Bend-La Pine Schools zip codes, and between \$812,000 and \$1.5 million in associated health care charges. The results also support the conclusion that Healthy Schools demonstrated substantial district-wide improvements to school services that led to the ED changes and positive changes toward targeted adolescent health outcomes. **Deschutes County Healthy Schools is an efficient and effective approach to improving adolescent health outcomes on a population scale.** The program works by embedding local public health agency staff into the district office and middle and high schools to serve as their designated coordinator for a data-driven school health improvement process.

The evaluation results are summarized into three areas: Successful Adoption and Integration, Improved School-Based Services, and Improved Adolescent Health Outcomes.



**Successful
Adoption and
Integration**



**Improved School-
Based Services**



**Improved
Adolescent
Health Outcomes**



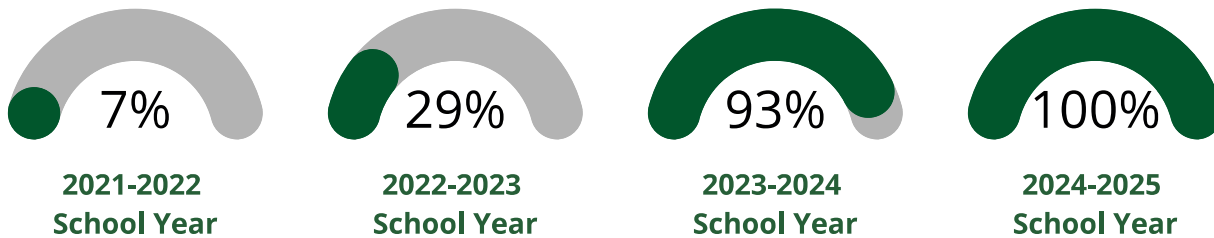
Evaluation Results: Successful Adoption and Integration

Healthy Schools successfully integrated into Bend-La Pine Schools. These results demonstrate strong system adoption and sustained impact across schools.

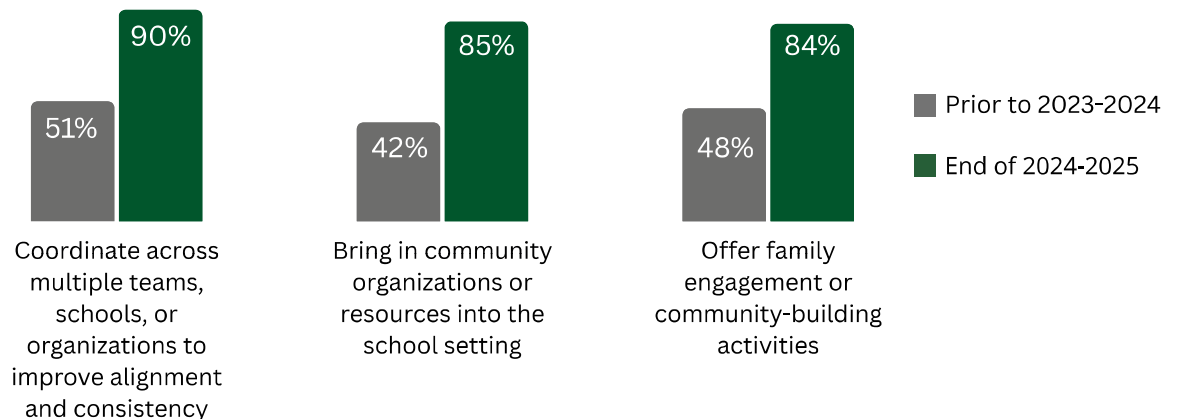
100% of middle and high schools adopted Healthy Schools to the point of reaching students.

Proportion of BLS Schools Adopting the Healthy Schools Program

Out of 14 BLS Sites with Assigned Public Health Specialists



School administrators and staff rated their schools as improving in several categories as a result of Healthy Schools



“With Healthy Schools, we have great team collaboration with a strong and involved leader (our Public Health Specialist). Most of the activities we accomplished wouldn't have happened or been as successful if our Public Health Specialist hadn't been a partner in making them happen. - School Counselor/Nurse

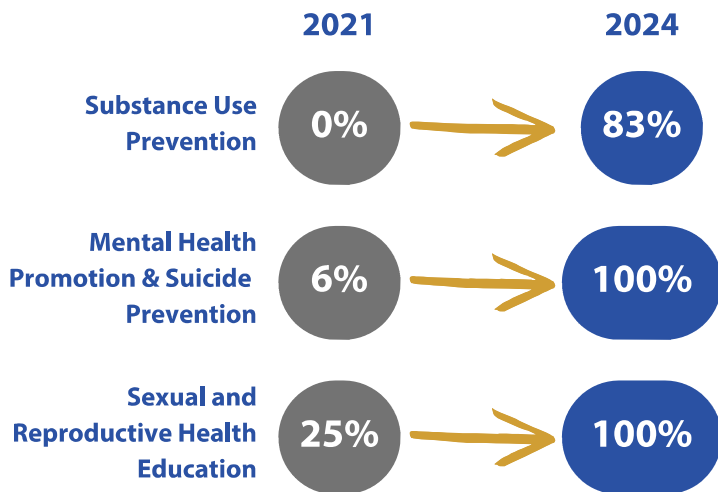
Having our Public Health Specialist in our building is crucial!!! They drive this work. - School Administrator”



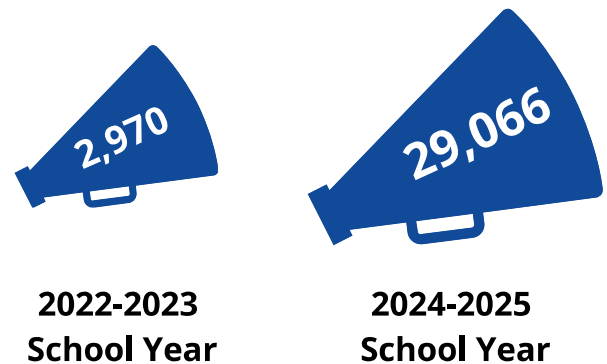
Evaluation Results: Improved School-Based Services

All middle and high school students have been reached with multiple programs and services designed to prevent or address mental health, suicide, and substance use. These services work by increasing connectedness, coping skills, and help-seeking.

The proportion of health teachers covering health topics using effective curriculum dramatically increased.



Healthy Schools increased the number of students, families, and staff engaging in positive mental health activities.

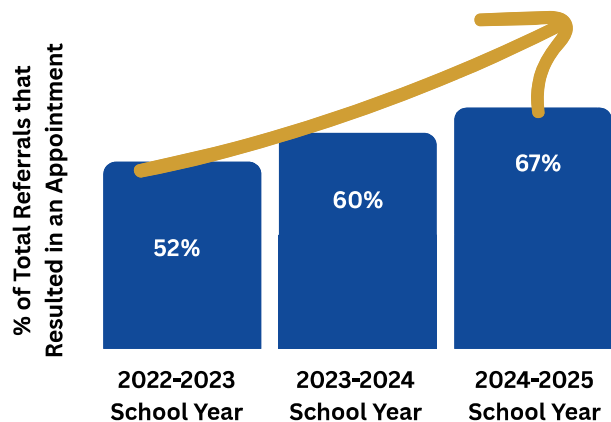


Healthy Schools has notably increased the number of behavioral health care referrals that resulted in appointments.

“ Having open initiatives and discussions around suicide ideation takes the stigma out of it and creates healthy conversations. Healthy Schools has led to these conversations. ”
-School Administrator

Referrals are Resulting in Appointments

Change Over 3 Years out of 546 Referrals for BLS Students ages 12-17





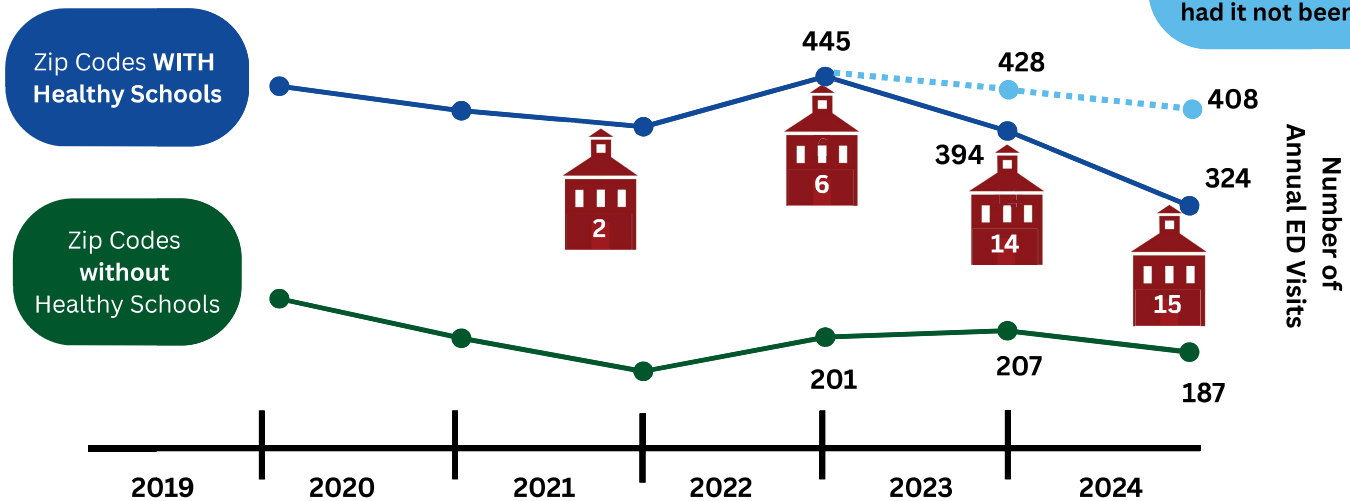
Evaluation Results: Improved Adolescent Health Outcomes

Healthy Schools has made a positive impact on adolescent health outcomes related to student mental health, suicide, and substance use. By 2024, results demonstrate a significant reduction in behavioral health-related emergency department visits for adolescents living in zip codes with Healthy Schools compared to the comparison group. This equates to between \$812,000 to \$1.5 million in avoided health care charges.

Emergency Department (ED) visits began **DECREASING** as **MORE** schools in Bend-La Pine **ADOPTED** Healthy Schools

About 70% of Deschutes County lives in a zip code with Healthy Schools.

Dotted line indicating what **would have happened** in zip codes with Healthy Schools had it not been adopted



Number of Schools that Adopted Healthy Schools

Healthy Schools prevented 21% of behavioral health Emergency Department (ED) visits in one year (2024).

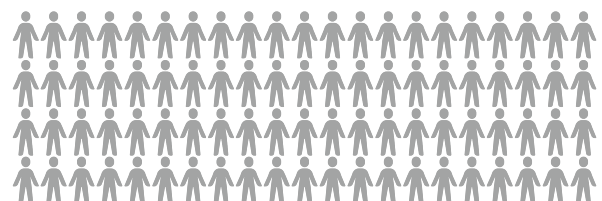


1 in 5

Behavioral Health **Emergency Department visits*** were **prevented** for youth ages 11-17 from zip codes **with Healthy Schools**

* Emergency Department visits for suicide, substance use, depression, and mental health

...that means we prevented **84** visits in one year.



Putting It All Together

Healthy Schools has demonstrated that placing Local Public Health staff with expertise in Prevention and Health Promotion practices in middle and high schools is an effective approach to prevent and intervene early on public health concerns. These changes improve school-based services and reduce high cost services like emergency department use. This has direct impact on student, family, and community social, emotional, mental, and behavioral well-being.

The Healthy Schools program has made, and continues to make, positive change for students, families, schools, and the greater Deschutes County community.

“My freshman year, I had a lot of mental health problems, and [my dad] just didn’t know what to do with it, so I had to go talk to people that weren’t my dad. And it was, like, really hard, not to talk to my dad about it. And now I feel like I can talk to my dad about it, and I feel like I can be like ‘Dad, I need help.’ Yeah, so it changed, like, how my dad’s dynamic is when it comes to talking about mental health.”

“Because at [my former school], I did not go to class, like, I’m just putting it out there, I did not go to class. And then I joined Sources, and I started, like, going most days. And so it like, first of all, it helped me find a community. And second of all, it helped me, like, more, like, engage in school and like hearing about that through other things. Like, it kind of like brought it together.”

“Some people tried to cope or to help with home problems... they do substances to help them out. Now we have a lot more resources out there available for them, and we try to make them feel comfortable talking to our counselors or other staff members they trust. Normally [the counselors’ office] has been empty and you just walk in. Now the appointments are like hard to get because there’s so many kids coming in to talk to them.”

Healthy Schools impact quotes from Sources Peer Leader students

Acknowledgements

Healthy Schools was made possible through funding provided by Bend-La Pine Schools and Deschutes County. The commitment to joint funding and ownership of this program allows resources to be directed in a manner that addresses our local community's needs and priorities. This partnership is an innovative approach to supporting our community's kids, families, and schools as well as the overall health of the community.

“ I think this partnership with public schools is critical. Students are facing mental health issues due to normal teen social, physical and emotional development, in addition to, escalating news about politics, war, climate change, etc. The exposure to so many areas of stress weighs on all of us. Teens are at a more vulnerable time to start unhealthy behaviors. The partnership offers alternatives and positive resources.

- Teacher ”

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Reach out and ask us questions. We are eager to talk about this program. Contact us by email or find out more from our webpage:

- healthyschools@deschutes.org
- deschutes.org/healthyschools



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