Nemours Children's Health Joins New Collaborative to Help Keep Kids in School

Wilmington, DE (August 13, 2021)– Nemours Children's Health, Colonial School District, Delaware Health Information Network (DHIN), and The Data Service Center are excited to announce a new collaborative project to share school attendance data with primary care providers across the state. This collaboration, Data Access for Student Health (D.A.S.H.), is the first of its kind in the region, and one of just two such projects in the country.

Studies show that chronic absenteeism, defined as missing more than ten percent of the school year, has been linked to lowered academic performance and lower rates of kids staying in school. Chronic school absenteeism can also lead to higher risk of substance abuse and violent behavior.

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"There are many reasons children may miss school, but some of the top reasons for gaps in attendance are related to poverty and chronic illnesses with some of the top health-related reasons as asthma, mental health concerns, and dental emergencies," explains Kara Odom Walker, MD, MPH, MSHS, Nemours Executive Vice President, Chief Population Health Officer. "This new DASH collaboration epitomizes Nemours' bold new strategy of redefining children's health, and how we need to work with our community partners to make that happen. This partnership underscores how Nemours is committed to supporting children's live, work and play environments beyond medicine, which are all factors in achieving health."

With parental consent, school attendance as well as whether the student has an education plan (504/IEP), will be collected via Colonial School District and shared with DHIN via the Data Service Center. When a threshold of absences is noted, it will create an alert. Through DHIN's event notification system, primary care providers will be notified and encouraged to reach out to the family to better understand the cause of their child missing school. Additionally, by alerting the provider to a student's education plan, a holistic care plan could be created with the child's parent or guardian.

"Awareness of attendance data, specifically absences, will help primary care providers address the immediate health and social needs of children," explains Jonathan Miller, DM, Medical Director of Value-Based Care. "We also recognize that regular attendance is more challenging for children with more complex medical conditions. Early detection enables healthcare providers and care coordinators to proactively reach out to address evolving care needs."

"By leveraging the event notification technology that many of Delaware's clinicians already rely upon in coordinating patient care, DHIN can be a conduit for this important data," says Jan Lee, MD, DHIN Chief Executive Officer. "Making health data useful is what we aim to do, and a partnership utilizing this information to help reduce school absenteeism is one we are thrilled to support."

"The goal is simple – keep kids in school. But to do this we must understand why they are chronically absent. By having the primary care provider reach out, in addition to the school, we are hopeful that the families feel more supported. It's not punishment, it's a conversation that hopefully leads to a solution for the child returning to school," notes Jon Cooper, Ed.D., Director of Health and Wellness, Colonial School District.

School attendance and academic performance impacts children's future well-being and is linked to long-term health and positive outcomes. Collection of absenteeism data will help address not just the immediate issues at hand for the child and family, it will also provide the data that is needed to evaluate the longer-term impact of programs and interventions.

This new collaboration will:

- Link attendance to health outcomes for students across all schools in the district.
- Share data on attendance, with parental consent, with primary care providers through DHIN. This will allow healthcare providers to work directly with parents and schools to improve attendance and determine if there is an underlying reason for missing school.
- Permit analysis of attendance data and health data on an anonymized basis to help plan public health interventions to improve attendance.

Colonial School District has agreed to be the pilot district, but the goal is for more school districts to join the collaborative as soon as possible. While Nemours brought the idea forward and is the project's convener, the data will be shared with primary

care providers throughout the state.

According to Colonial Superintendent Jeff Menzer, Ed.D., "We are trying to design a model that helps to identify students who might be missing a lot of school for a number of different reasons, their asthma is flaring up, they don't have a ride, they are sharing a computer with their sibling, etc. We want to ensure kids have every opportunity to be in school. This collaboration hopes to enhance the relationship between the schools and the medical community to support our children by identifying barriers and giving them extra supports wherever feasible."

About Nemours Children's Health

Nemours Children's Health is one of the nation's largest multistate pediatric health systems, including two free-standing children's hospitals and a network of nearly 80 primary and specialty care practices across five states. Nemours seeks to transform the health of children by adopting a holistic health model that utilizes innovative, safe, and high-quality care, while also caring for the health of the whole child beyond medicine. Nemours also powers the world's most-visited website for information on the health of children and teens, KidsHealth.org.

The Nemours Foundation, established through the legacy and philanthropy of Alfred I. duPont, provides pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy, and prevention programs to the children, families and communities it serves.

About Colonial School District

Colonial School District is a Pre-K-12 school district in New Castle, DE which serves approximately 10,000 students in eight elementary schools, three middle schools, one high school (the largest in the state of Delaware), and two special needs schools. Colonial offers innovative programming on all levels. From academically challenging preschool, elementary, and middle school curriculum, language immersion programs, theme-based middle schools, and a comprehensive high school featuring three college-level academics, Colonial leads the state in offering high-quality, cutting-edge programs for students.

About The Data Service Center

The Data Service Center (DSC) is a non-profit technology consortium owned and operated by Colonial and Red Clay Consolidated School Districts. The DSC provides school districts in Delaware with data processing, application development, training, and support services related to the business of schools. For more than 40 years, DSC has worked closely with Delaware school districts to develop applications specifically addressing their data collection, processing, and reporting needs. DSC maintains a suite of easy-to-use, reliable, and affordable web-based applications that meet the ever-growing demands of schools and districts. Each DSC application is a custom solution defined, developed, maintained, and supported by DSC staff through collaboration with Delaware's school districts/charter schools as well as DOE staff for our State contracts. Through this work, DSC has developed, not only an extensive knowledge of Delaware's educational data and processing requirements but also forged personal relationships with Delaware's district and charter school personnel. DSC takes pride in the work of making the lives of those in the Delaware School Districts easier.

About DHIN

DHIN, the Delaware Health Information Network, was the first live, statewide health information exchange in the nation. Launched in 2007, today it serves all of Delaware's acute care hospitals and nearly 100% of the state's medical providers. More than 14 million clinical results and reports are delivered through DHIN each year. There are over three million unique patients with results on DHIN, including patients from all 50 states. DHIN shares real-time clinical information to improve patient outcomes, eliminate the duplication of services and reduce the cost of healthcare. For more information, visit www.DHIN.org and connect on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram (@DHIN_hie).

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