



**HENRY  
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HEALTH  
DEPARTMENT**

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*Promoting Health and Quality of Life for all Residents of Henry County*

October 21, 2013

Ohio Department of Education  
25 South Front Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215-4183

To whom it may concern:

Henry County Health Department strongly supports Liberty Center Local School District's Straight A Fund application to the Ohio Department of Education to eliminate learning barriers and to build students' academic success by fostering social-emotional skills and identifying and preventing mental health problems early.

Liberty Center Local Schools recognize that 1) interventions that strengthen students' social, emotional, and decision-making skills positively impact their academic achievement, and 2) prevention programs that reach all students and early identification and intervention with at-risk students (e.g. education on mental health issues, suicide prevention, social skills training, school violence and bullying prevention, and screening for emotional and behavioral problems) are crucial. As a result, Liberty Center Local School District proposes to partner with local behavioral health providers to effectively prevent and/or intervene with students struggling with mental health problems (such as depression or suicidal ideation) or social/ family pressures (like bullying and domestic or dating violence). Given the strong relationship between mental health and substance abuse, the district also plans to team up with Great Lakes Biomedical to continue its successful substance abuse screening program.

Monitoring the health status of local youth to identify community health problems is an essential public health service provided by Henry County Health Department and our local partners, including Liberty Center Local School District. We have conducted four joint community health assessments since 1998. Just as Liberty Center School District is doing in this application, our partners use the resulting data to identify populations at risk for specific health conditions; to select effective strategies that will improve health and quality of life of local residents; and to seek resources to collaboratively implement these strategies.

The 2013 Henry County Community Health Status Assessment reveals that many youth in grades 6-12 report mental health issues and social/family pressures as causes of anxiety, stress, and depression for them:

- Fighting with friends (reported by 26% of youth)
- Other stress at home (17%)
- Peer Pressure (14%)
- Fighting at home (23%)
- Being bullied, dating relationship, breakup (each 16%)

In the past year, 53% of local youth report being bullied; 13% seriously contemplated (and 7% attempted) suicide; 4% report being hit, slapped, or physically hurt by a boy/girlfriend; and 4% report being forced to engage in sexual intercourse. In the past month, 21% of local youth report feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 weeks or more and 6% used marijuana, while 18% were current drinkers and 8% current smokers.

The Henry County Board of Health and Health Department staff looks forward to the positive mental and physical health and academic outcomes that Henry County youth in the Liberty Center Local School District will achieve through the funding of this Straight A Fund application!

Sincerely,

Anne Goon, MS, RD, LD

Henry County Health Commissioner