



Children's in the Community is a quarterly newsletter that highlights UPMC Children's efforts in the community, celebrates the successes and achievements of program partners, and connects people and partners to important resources.

UPMC Children's Community Health aims to improve health outcomes, reduce health disparities, and enhance quality of life for children and families through five strategic priorities:

- Supporting and strengthening families.
- Increasing access to care and resources.
- Addressing health-related social needs.
- Promoting community-wide health and prevention.
- Advancing best practices into systems that impact child health.

Learn more about our efforts

Supporting and Strengthening Families



Care Beyond the Clinic: Helping a Family Find Clarity, Confidence, and Hope

Clear vision can make a powerful difference in a child's confidence and success at school. UPMC Children's Family Care Connection (FCC) staff from Penn Hills helped one mom and her children access free vision care and eyeglasses through Mission of Mercy Pittsburgh.

Staff provided early-morning transportation, secured language interpretation, and stayed with the family throughout the day to ensure every step of the process was understood.

By removing financial, language, and transportation barriers, UPMC Children's Community Health programs help children see more clearly — and open the door to greater opportunity.

Thriving Children

Accessing care can be overwhelming for families navigating health care systems in a language that is not their own. Through family support services, UPMC Children's Family Care Connection (FCC) works alongside families to remove barriers and build confidence.

One neighborhood family has received hands-on support with navigating Early Intervention services and coordinating medical care for their child since enrolling in FCC one year ago. By providing language-sensitive guidance and in-person support during hospital visits, the team from FCC helped ensure the family could access the services their child needed.

This ongoing partnership reflects how Community Health programs support and strengthen families and help children and families thrive.

Increasing Access to Care



UPMC Children's Community Health Partners with Pittsburgh Public Schools and Vision to Learn to Increase Access to Essential Services

For many Pittsburgh Public Schools student-athletes, accessing required sports physicals can be a challenge due to cost and limited health care access. UPMC Children's Community Health partnered with Pittsburgh Public Schools to bring the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile directly to school communities, providing free sports physicals in a familiar and convenient setting.

UPMC Children's Community Health also partnered with Vision to Learn at select locations, enabling students to receive vision screenings and eyeglasses — often on the same day. This one-stop approach removes barriers, ensures students are ready to participate safely in sports, and reflects UPMC Children's commitment to expanding access to care where it is needed most.

Addressing Health-Related Social Needs

You Are Not Alone

When one family arrived at the UPMC Children's Hilltop Health Hub in Mt. Oliver, they were navigating multiple challenges at once — concerns about their children's health, housing instability, food insecurity, and ongoing financial stress.

Although the family had recently moved to Clairton, they wanted to continue receiving care at the "health hub", a place they trusted. Making that possible required coordination, outreach, and a commitment to meeting the family where they were.

Through the support of community health worker Brenda Gurley, the family was reconnected to essential preventive health care services. They were also connected to the UPMC Children's Family Care Connection Center in Mt. Oliver for additional support.

What could have felt overwhelming instead became manageable. Staff worked alongside the family to ensure no need went unnoticed and no question went unanswered.

The impact of that support extended far beyond the clinic visit. With encouragement and guidance, the mother secured employment as a caregiver and began the process of finding new housing. Perhaps most importantly, the family felt seen, supported, and reassured knowing they were not facing their challenges alone.

Promoting Communitywide Health and Prevention



Healthy Schools Program Garners National Attention

UPMC Children's Community Health's school-health partnerships are gaining national recognition for their impact on student and school wellness.

Earlier this school year, representatives from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation visited Pittsburgh Phillips K-5 and Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8, two Pittsburgh Public Schools named among America's Healthiest Schools.

During the visits, school wellness leaders and Community Health partners shared how collaborative efforts support students, staff, and families.

At Pittsburgh Phillips, Healthier Generation representatives toured student relaxation spaces, learned about the school's lunch program, explored staff well-being initiatives, and discussed family engagement activities.

At Pittsburgh Arsenal 6-8, the focus was on the school's long-standing partnership with UPMC Children's, including wellness programming, annual family wellness events, and the vital role school nurses play on wellness teams.

These visits highlight the strength of school-health partnerships and the role they play in creating environments where students can thrive. National recognition from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation underscores the success of these collaborations and affirms UPMC Children's Community Health's commitment to advancing best practices that support child health across school systems.



Empowering Healthy Sleep; Building Brain Health Through Better Sleep; Rest to Learn

Sleep plays a powerful role in how students learn, grow, and care for their mental and physical health. Through outreach and partnership, UPMC Children's Community Health brought that message directly to students at Pittsburgh Obama through engaging presentations on sleep hygiene and brain health.

Over three days, 135 middle and high school students participated in interactive discussions that went far beyond being told to "get more sleep." Instead, students were encouraged to think critically about their own schedules, responsibilities, and habits and how small changes could make a meaningful difference.

One student's reflection stood out. After learning about preparing for rest, he shared that he planned to feed his pet snake earlier in the evening so it wouldn't disrupt his sleep. The moment perfectly captured the goal of the program, helping students apply health concepts in ways that fit their own lives.

By meeting students where they are and treating them as active participants in their health, these sessions helped build knowledge and practical skills. Middle and high schoolers are uniquely positioned to benefit from this education as they juggle academic demands, extracurricular activities, and growing independence.

Through partnerships like this one, UPMC Children's Community Health continues to promote prevention, empower young people, and support healthier futures one good night's sleep at a time.

Advancing Best Practices into Systems that Impact Child Health



Tobacco- and Vape-Free Schools

Schools across the region are facing a growing challenge: how to effectively address tobacco and vape use among students. Thanks to philanthropic support from the Grable Foundation, UPMC Children's Community Health was able to launch the Tobacco and Vape-Free Learning Cohort, an initiative designed to turn policy into meaningful, practical action.

Developed in direct response to data from the Thriving Schools Integrated Assessment by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, the cohort brings together educators, administrators, and school staff for guided virtual learning sessions. Through evidence-based strategies, shared problem-solving, and collaborative discussion, schools gain the knowledge and confidence needed to address vaping as a health issue, not just a disciplinary one.

A key component of the cohort is the distribution of Tool Kits to each participating school. These kits include essential safety materials and a clear procedural guide for handling and disposing of confiscated devices, helping schools respond consistently and safely.

"This program finally gave us a clear and safe process to address vaping, turning policy into real protection for our students," one wellness coordinator noted.

By combining education, resources, and peer support, the Tobacco and Vape-Free Learning Cohort is empowering schools to create healthier environments for students, staff, and families. This initiative reflects Community Health's commitment to prevention, systems-level change, and ensuring schools have the tools they need to protect student health now and into the future.

Please contact Anne Marie Kuchera at Annemarie.kuchera@chp.edu for more information about UPMC Children's Community Health. Thank you for reading.

Sign up for our newsletter!