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**Date:** October 12, 2021

**For Immediate Release**

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## **NORTHWEST COLORADO HEALTH PARTNERS WITH STEAMBOAT SPRINGS AND HAYDEN SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO OFFER SCHOOL BASED DENTAL SERVICES**

Northwest Colorado Health announced today that they have been approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) to expand dental services in partnership with local school districts at our area schools via a mobile school based health center. Northwest Colorado Health received funding through the American Rescue Plan grant to purchase the mobile dental unit that will be used to provide these new school-based services. The goal of the funds are to modernize health care delivery and to help advance health equity in medically underserved communities across the state.

School-based health centers (SBHCs) are health care facilities located inside a school or on school grounds. This program will be part of Northwest Colorado Health's Community Health Center Program and will be provided through a mobile unit. All students will have access to services, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay. As of January 2021, Colorado is home to 69 SBHCs, many of which are operated by Community Health Centers. This will be the first school-based health center in our region.

"We are extremely excited about this partnership. After many discussions with local superintendents and assessing regional health access data, we affirmed that there is an unmet need for oral health care services for children in our area" said Stephanie Einfeld, CEO of Northwest Colorado Health. "This new model of care will break down access barriers for many children and community members in need of dental care. Long term, our vision is to use this mobile unit to serve multiple schools and other locations in the region and potentially add medical and behavioral health care as needs are identified by the community."

"Students will miss less school; parents won't have to miss work for dental appointments," said Dr. Brad Meeks, Superintendent of Steamboat Springs School District. "Having a dental home at school is a great option for all of our students."

“The direct and indirect benefits to our students and their families are exciting,” said Dr. Christy Sinner, Superintendent of Hayden School District. “These school based health services will offer direct access to quality health care.”

One of the key steps in the process is to distribute a needs assessment survey of school age children in participating schools. Parents, students and staff will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire to identify where the greatest and most urgent needs are so that school districts can prioritize the roll out of this program. Services will be available in limited capacity before the end of the year with more capacity becoming available throughout 2022.

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