

JHS may get health center

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Jackson High School could house the city's third school-based health center next fall if the state approves a grant submitted this week, officials said.

The Center for Family Health operates health centers at Jackson's Northeast Elementary School and the Middle School at Parkside and is seeking a third grant to open a high school location, Executive Director Molly Kaser said.

The new center -- as the one at Parkside does -- would provide 10- to 21-year olds with services that include preventive care, sick visits and mental-health care.

Jackson High School is not expected to have a full-time dental hygienist as Parkside does, but it would be served by a mobile dental-care program, Kaser said.

``What we find is that most of the kids we serve at Parkside are of middle-school age," she said. ``It is certainly not terribly convenient for them if they're a student at Jackson High for them to get to Parkside, especially during the school day."

The Center for Family Health will be notified April 1 whether it gets the grant. If it does, Kaser said she hopes to be operating by August.

The center could bill insurance companies and Medicaid and could also provide services to uninsured youths, she said.

``Teenagers just have very low utilization rates for health care," Kaser said. ``We knew we needed to go where the kids are and that means schools."

The grant, issued by the state departments of Community Health and Education, would be worth \$175,000 per year for five years, Kaser said. The district's two other health centers receive the same funding.

Students who have used the Parkside location said they were disappointed similar services were unavailable at the high school, said Linda Meeder, health and human services director for Jackson Public Schools.

Kaser said the Center for Family Health would need to raise about \$330,000 for renovation and construction of a site inside the high school.

The \$175,000 per year would be the initial budget, however, Parkside's is now about \$500,000 three years after opening, said Kaser. She expects similar growth at the high school.