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## Schools are hub for families in need

by Dennis Coday

NCR Today

Here's an innovative idea for social service delivery: "We really think about schools as being the center of the community where everything comes together," said Josefina Alvarado-Mena, executive director of Safe Passages, a nonprofit organization in Oakland, Calif. Alameda County youth.

"The old paradigm was that families had to go to multiple services, often at multiple locations," Alvarado-Mena said. "Many got lost in transit or lost in translation."

By contrast, Safe Passages uses schools as conduits to bring social services to youth and their families. Focusing on poor and underperforming youth in middle school and early childhood, the organization offers academic support, physical and mental health services, violence prevention classes, and family therapy. Full-time site coordinators at each participating school help Safe Passages reach the most vulnerable students, including undocumented immigrants and young people with violent backgrounds and unstable families.

The program offers these two small signs of success: a 72 percent drop in student suspensions in participating middle schools, and a 45 percent drop in repeat offenses among youths who participated in the organization's program for a year.

Read the full story at New America Media: Building 'Safe Passages' for Alameda County Students and Families.

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