

## **Basic Life Support and First Aid Education at Miami-Dade County Public Schools**

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Almost 13% of children in the United States have special health care needs, which often require emergency care for acute and sometimes life-threatening complications. Children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) spend much of their day with school personnel that lack specific training or resources to respond to emergencies. Dr. Federico Laham, a resident at Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami, felt that training school staff was critical to improving child health and safety. With this goal in mind, he developed a training module that would help school personnel respond to medical emergencies.

Based on previous experience with a first aid training project in public schools and the personal experience of a sister with special health care needs, Dr. Laham was inspired to bring first aid and basic life support training to schools in Miami Dade County in which CYSHCN were enrolled. After reviewing school emergency preparedness guidelines, program results from similar initiatives done in public schools across the country, and surveying faculty and staff at local schools on their first aid and basic life support competency, Dr. Laham felt this initiative would fill a necessary community need in Miami Dade County. Dr. Laham worked closely with the Miami Dade County Public School System, specifically with principals and staff from each of the five participating schools, as well as representatives from NOVA Southeastern University, who facilitated the training sessions and provided certification. The guidance of Dr. Patricia Cantwell- Director of the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit and other pediatric faculty at the University of Miami provided direction and focus to Dr. Laham's training program.

Dr. Laham and the team of resident partners created and implemented individualized training specific to the type of emergencies that school staff might encounter. Dr. Laham saw immediate success in implementing this initiative. "The schools' responses were incredible," commented Dr. Laham. It was clear to everyone involved in the emergency response training sessions that this type of training was very much in need. Dr. Laham and his team asked participants at the schools (teachers, school nurses, and administrative staff) to complete surveys indicating their experience, knowledge, and level of confidence prior to and after being involved in the training. While final data are still being collected, preliminary numbers indicate a large increase in confidence and knowledge after the basic life support and first aid training. With approximately 1,000 CYSHCN benefiting from this training, Dr. Laham hopes that other residents will get involved in the project and multiply the number of schools in the training program and diversify the type of trainings available.

Dr. Laham learned a great deal from his project. The experience gave him the chance to work directly with the schools and he found they welcomed him with open arms. He learned about the necessary, but sometimes frustrating, school system codes, rules, and calendars that affected the impact he hoped his initiative would achieve. He also learned more about the challenges CYSHCN face every day and the absence of training previously available to teach basic life support to the teachers and staff who work with CYSHCN. Finally, Dr. Laham learned about the difference that one individual could make by partnering with others to achieve a common goal.