

California Schools, Health Net & The Centene Foundation Create a Culture of Belonging Through National No One Eats Alone® Day - Feb. 20, 2024

More than 2,000 schools nationwide are expected to participate in this year's event.

SACRAMENTO, Calif., Feb. 20, 2024 [PRNewswire/](#) -- [Health Net](#), one of California's most experienced Medi-Cal managed care health plans and wholly owned subsidiary of [Centene Corporation](#), supported [No One Eats Alone® Day](#), a prevention initiative aimed at fostering inclusion and a culture of belonging in middle schools. California schools hosted events on Feb. 16, 2024, with the help of Health Net. [Centene Foundation](#), the philanthropic arm of Centene Corporation, sponsored the event.

"Social isolation has emerged as a significant concern in our society, with various studies highlighting its impact on mental and physical health," said Amber Kemp, vice president, Medi-Cal regional lead at Health Net. "Partnering with Beyond Differences to support No One Eats Alone® Day allows us to encourage students to break out of their comfort zones, make new connections and foster a sense of community with their peers. This community building is essential to the overall well-being of our youth."

According to [public health research](#), social isolation has been found to have negative impact on the mental wellbeing of children, leading to issues such as depression, anxiety, self-harm, thoughts of suicide, and higher chances of engaging in substance abuse. A [study](#) by Beyond Differences indicated that when students are provided programs to learn about social isolation and given the tools to connect with classmates, nearly 85 percent of the students felt empowered to be leaders and create a culture of acceptance and belonging at their school.

The nonprofit organization [Beyond Differences®](#) established No One Eats Alone as an initiative to combat social isolation. This year, over 1 million students are expected to participate in activities designed to teach them about social isolation and the negative impact it can have on health and academic performance. With in-class lessons, interactive exercises and a creative art project that focuses on growing our social connections, students will work together to make their school more welcoming and accepting for everyone.

"This year's No One Eats Alone theme, Let's Grow: Planting New Connections, was inspired by the U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on social connection where he spotlights the negative health effects of social isolation and emphasizes that connections need to be nurtured like a garden," says Laura Talmus, co-founder, and executive director of Beyond Differences. "Our curriculum dives deep into recognizing emotions, understanding social isolation and gives students tools to be social isolation disruptors and ambassadors of belonging."

About Health Net

Founded in California more than 40 years ago, Health Net, a wholly owned subsidiary of Centene Corporation, believes that every person deserves a safety net for their health, regardless of age, income, employment status or current state of health. Today, we provide health plans for individuals, families, businesses of every size and people who qualify for Medi-Cal or Medicare. Together with our 90,000 network providers, Health Net serves three million members across the state. We also offer access to substance abuse programs, behavioral health services, employee assistance programs and managed health care products related to prescription drugs. We make these health plans and services available through Health Net, LLC and its subsidiaries: Health Net of California, Inc., Health Net Life Insurance Company and Health Net Community Solutions, Inc. These entities are wholly owned subsidiaries of Centene Corporation, a leading healthcare enterprise committed to transforming the health of the communities we serve, one person at a time. Health Net employs more than 6,300 people in California who work at one of five regional Talent Hub offices. For more information, visit www.HealthNet.com.

About the Centene Foundation

The [Centene Foundation](#) (the "Foundation"), a private nonprofit focused on investing in economically challenged communities, is the philanthropic arm of [Centene Corporation](#) (NYSE: [CNC](#)) ("Centene"). The Foundation supports projects and initiatives strategically aligned with Centene's mission-driven culture and enhances the work Centene is doing to remove the barriers to wellness underserved and low-income populations face. The Foundation is committed to addressing social determinants of health and improving health equity in three distinct areas of focus: healthcare access, social services, and education. To learn more, visit the Centene Foundation's [website](#).

About Beyond Differences

Nonprofit Beyond Differences' mission is to inspire students to end social isolation in middle schools and create a culture of belonging for everyone. Founded in 2010, Beyond Differences has created year-round programs to tackle a wide range of issues that lead to social isolation. When educators register for National Programs -- No One Eats Alone, Know Your Classmates®, Be Kind Online® -- they also get access to Community-Inspired Curriculum written by Beyond Differences' National Teen Board. These include Queer Visibility, CIRV (Centering Immigrant and Refugee Voices), and Stand Up for AAPI Youth. All curriculum and activity kits are provided free for schools. Currently, more than 10,000 schools have used Beyond Differences programs and materials. For more information, visit nooneeatsalone.org.

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