



***Naomi's Story:  
How school-based telehealth made a difference for one rural family***

Sometimes Naomi Bustos marvels at the silence in her Spencer home.

Her three boys — ages 13, 12, and 7 — once fought, yelled, and ran wild well beyond the antics of competitive brothers.

Each of her children struggles with at least one diagnosed mental health condition that manifests in extreme behaviors. The result was daily chaos and disruptions, both at home and at school. Teachers, staff, and administrators at the school were also quite familiar with the boys' classroom struggles.

Bustos attributes the newfound peace in her home to a partnership between Classroom Clinic and the Spencer Community School District.

Classroom Clinic provides rural school districts timely and convenient access to children's mental health care using telehealth and related technologies. The organization, founded by a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner, is in western Iowa, but serves schools across the state.

The Spencer School District contracted with Classroom Clinic due to an increasing demand for services that local mental health providers couldn't meet.

"I think we waited eight months one time to get seen by a provider in Spencer," Bustos said. "I know they are doing their best, but when you've got a kid in crisis, that's just too long."

Sue Gehling, the founder of Classroom Clinic, agrees that families in crisis should not have to wait that long for care. "Through creativity and collaboration, we believe we can help address the unmet student mental health needs so many rural school districts are struggling with."

Classroom Clinic quickly scheduled Bustos' boys and that has made a dramatic difference in both her life and the lives of her children.

Bustos' eldest, Alex, lives with a combination of three diagnosis. Oppositional defiant disorder caused him to be uncooperative with his teachers and hostile to his peers.

"It was like he lived to piss people off, but he didn't mean to do it," his mother said.

Alex also lives with attention deficit disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder. The trio of behavior issues were diagnosed before preschool, but help was sparse, and the medication prescribed ineffective.

Alex's behavior worsened as he entered adolescence. His mother often had to drive him two or three hours away to get help and the waits between appointments were often many months apart.

A friend told Bustos about Classroom Clinic services through the Spencer schools. Alex started meeting with Sue Gehling, a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner who specializes in children's mental health care.

"It was a great process, because Sue talked to me about how I was feeling and what I observed and then she would talk to each of the kids and ask them the same questions," Bustos said. "She really listened, and I think that made the difference in our care."

After working with Classroom Clinic, Alex's behavior turned more positive.

"Before, if I asked him to put something on the table, he would ask 700 questions," Naomi said. "Now he just does it and goes on with his day."

Alex's behavior has improved so much that since he turned 13, his mother trusts him to babysit the other children when she's at work or away from the house for errands.

Her other children are similarly benefiting from Classroom Clinic services.

Chris, Bustos' middle son, lives with chronic anxiety. When Chris was younger, he nearly drowned. Chris' grandfather saved him, but the grandfather died in the process.

"He would just shut down," Bustos said. "You couldn't get him to go to school or leave his room. It was terrible to watch, and you feel extremely helpless as a mom."

Now Chris is receiving treatment through Classroom Clinic and his anxiety is better managed through counseling and medication.

Nico, Bustos' youngest son, lives with attention deficit hyperactive disorder. As a small child, he had so much energy that he backed himself into corners and climbed the walls with his arms and legs.

Now Nico is on a medicine regimen that helps control the disorder.

"His teachers told me he's had a 70% behavior improvement," his mother said. "Before, he only wanted to do what he wanted to do when he wanted to do it. That's down to almost zero."

The sweeping changes to her children's behavior and the obvious relief that's given the family has made Bustos a calmer person in a more orderly home.

"The biggest thing is the quiet," Bustos said. "I haven't raised my voice only once or twice in the last few months. It's amazing what good care brings."

***To learn more about Classroom Clinic, visit their website at [www.classroomclinic.com](http://www.classroomclinic.com)  
To contact a staff member, call 712-525-0993 or email [sue@classroomclinic.com](mailto:sue@classroomclinic.com)***