

Health Care Reform: Access to Care for All Children

Health reform provides significant opportunities to improve the health of our children and invest in our country's future. While care for children is inexpensive, the return on an investment in child development is substantial.

Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) have helped reduce the number of uninsured low-income children by one third since 1997. However, even with the additional four million children expected to receive coverage due to the 2009 CHIP reauthorization, five million infants, children, adolescents and young adults will still lack basic health care coverage. Additionally, due to rising health care costs, declines in employer-based coverage, and the economic recession, we expect to see an increase in the number of uninsured.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has adopted the following **Principles on Access***:

1. Every child must have quality health insurance.
2. Quality health insurance should be a right, regardless of income, for every child, pregnant women, their families, and ultimately all individuals.
3. All health insurance plans should have a comprehensive age appropriate benefits package directed to the special needs of the pediatric population as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.
4. Every child should receive care in a medical home with a primary care pediatrician, and have access to pediatric medical subspecialists, pediatric surgical specialists, pediatric mental and dental professionals, and hospitals with appropriate pediatric expertise.
5. All health plans should have payment rates that assure that children receive all recommended and needed services.

* The concept of quality health insurance includes portability, continuous coverage, streamlined and simplified administrative aspects, choice of clinician(s), and coordination with existing maternal and child health programs to ensure maximum health benefits to families.

MediKids: The MediKids Health Insurance Act, which the Academy has strongly supported since its introduction, would create a streamlined and comprehensive system that would achieve the goal of quality health insurance for all children regardless of family income. On Tuesday, January 6, 2009 Congressman Pete Stark (D-CA) reintroduced the MediKids Health Insurance Act.

Children's health is an investment in our future. Now is the time to ensure that children are provided with the appropriate services they need and deserve.