

Health Care Reform: Benefits to Meet All Children's Needs

Health insurance designed for adults can fail to prioritize pediatric-appropriate benefits such as preventive health care. As a result, critical opportunities to promote health and reduce future health care costs are being lost. Pediatricians promote and monitor the physical, mental, and behavioral/developmental health of children at every stage of development. Children and adolescents need to see their doctor on a set schedule of well-child visits where they receive preventive and well-child care to ensure that their unique health and developmental needs are addressed.

The American Academy of Pediatrics maintains that health care reform should:

- ★ Include a benefits package for children and adolescents based on the well-established Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) standard used by Medicaid.
- ★ Remove barriers to preventive care, such as deductibles and co-payments.
- ★ Couple payment rates with pediatric-appropriate benefits.
- ★ Recognize that "Standard Benefits" included in many private and managed care plans do not adequately address the specific health needs of the pediatric population.

Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT)

Children are a unique population with unique health care needs. The Academy strongly believes that the EPSDT benefits under Medicaid provide a gold standard of care for children. Both public and private insurance options must include comprehensive medical, dental, nutritional, and mental health services, like those covered by EPSDT, to ensure that all children have access to pediatric-appropriate, medically necessary services. Failure to provide such services will prevent children from reaching their full potential and lead to higher, longer-term health care costs.

Bright Futures

The definitive standards for pediatric well-child and preventive care are found in *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children and Adolescents—3rd edition*. *Bright Futures* provides guidelines for all aspects of recommended well-child visits from birth through adolescence, including physical, developmental and mental health screening as well as guidance for parents and caregivers.

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