

American Academy of Pediatrics
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



N • A • C • H
National Association of
Children's Hospitals



FAMILY VOICES®

For Release: April 12, 2005
9:30 a.m. (ET)

Contact: Marjorie Tharp, AAP
202-347-8600 (office)

NO TO MEDICAID CUTS; YES TO MEDICAID COMMISSION

Washington, DC---Four prominent child health organizations today called on Congress to protect Medicaid from funding cuts this year, and to adopt Senate budget language that would establish a Medicaid commission to evaluate the program. Medicaid provides health care to one in every four children and one in every three infants -- 26 million children younger than age 18.

“We’ve heard a lot about the increasing cost of Medicaid and the need to cut the federal budget, but we haven’t heard much about how to continue to meet the health care needs of those who depend on the program,” said Carol Berkowitz, MD, American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) president, at a press conference on Capitol Hill.

In March, the U.S. Senate passed an amendment by Senators Gordon Smith (R-OR) and Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) to eliminate \$15 billion in Medicaid cuts and establish a bipartisan commission to evaluate the program before making any attempts to reform Medicaid. The U.S. House of Representatives passed a budget bill to cut up to \$20 billion from Medicaid over 5 years. Congress is now conferencing to rectify the difference between the two.

“Children and youth with special health care needs must have access to an array of health services currently found in the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) program run by Medicaid,” explained Jennifer Cernoch, PhD, executive director of Family Voices. “It is the most comprehensive benefits package available. EPSDT is often the difference between children receiving appropriate care and falling through the cracks.”

Medicaid cuts can also affect the health care services available to all children in a community.

“Because children’s hospitals on average devote about half their patient care to children on Medicaid, they rely on the program’s funding in order to serve not just poor children, but all children in their communities,” said Peter Holbrook, MD, chief medical officer of Children’s National Medical Center in Washington, DC, and former trustee, National Association of Children’s Hospitals. “Medicaid cuts would require us to divert revenue from other sources to the care of poor and uninsured children, affecting children’s hospitals’ ability to fulfill their mission to all children.”

Children and Medicaid
2-2-2

Medicaid provides health care services to pregnant women and infants that are critical to a healthy start in life.

“The March of Dimes strongly opposes any attempt to narrow Medicaid benefits for these at-risk groups,” said Jennifer L. Howse, PhD, March of Dimes president. “Medicaid is the single most important source of coverage for maternity services, accounting for 1.4 million, or 37 percent, of births in hospitals, and the program – including EPSDT – is lifeline for millions of low-income infants and children.”

More than 100 pediatricians from across the country are in Washington, DC today to lobby their members of Congress on this issue.

“We cannot make decisions about people’s health care based solely on budget numbers,” Dr. Berkowitz said. “If any changes are made to Medicaid, let’s do them after there is careful study and assessment of the impact on the health and well being of our nation’s children.”

#

***The American Academy of Pediatrics** is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. For more information, go to www.aap.org.*

***Family Voices**, a national grassroots network of families and friends, advocates for health care services that are family-centered, community-based, comprehensive, coordinated and culturally competent for all children and youth with special health care needs. For more information, go to www.familyvoices.org.*

***The March of Dimes** is a national voluntary health agency whose mission is to improve the health of children by preventing birth defects and infant mortality. Founded in 1938, the March of Dimes funds programs of research, community services, education, and advocacy. For more information, go to www.marchofdimes.com.*

*Representing 130 children’s hospitals, the **National Association of Children’s Hospitals** addresses public policy issues affecting children’s hospitals’ missions of service to the children of their communities, including clinical care, education, research and advocacy. For more information, go to www.childrenshospitals.net.*