

Accomplishments of the Task Force on Foster Care

The Task Force on Foster Care (TFOFC) held its final meeting in April 2011. Task force members reviewed all of the task force activities, celebrated accomplishments, and made recommendations that will be forwarded to the new Committee on Foster Care, Adoption and Kinship Care (COFCAKC). Highlights of the accomplishments of the Task Force during its four-year tenure include:

Raised Awareness

There is now a raised awareness within the AAP and its membership about the unmet health and well-being needs of children and youth in foster care, as well as resources from the AAP to address these needs. The task force made an intentional effort to raise awareness by featuring articles and information in AAP News, Smart Briefs, Chapter Connections, AAP News OnCall, and other AAP listservs. In addition, various entities within the AAP have been strong partners of the TFOFC including Federal Affairs, State Government Affairs, Chapter and District Relations, Communications, Medical Home, Mental Health Initiatives, and Bright Futures. These partners have helped raise awareness within the AAP as well as with federal, state and chapter colleagues.

Federal Legislation

The TFOFC drafted wording for the health provision of the Fostering Connections legislation signed into law October 2008. The law mandates that states develop plans for overseeing the health care of children and youth in foster care. The TFOFC was instrumental in the AAP's Washington, DC Office support of additional federal legislation that was ultimately signed into law. As part of health reform, starting in 2014, youth aging out of foster care will be eligible for Medicaid coverage until the age of 26.

State/Chapter Work

The AAP State Government Affairs group, in collaboration with the TFOFC, conducted a major analysis of all but two state health plans (referenced above under "Federal Legislation") across six domains and compiled the information. This chart will be a major part of a project that will be targeted to Chapters for working with state colleagues on implementation of the plans. The TFOFC/AAP also funded five chapters to start the process of developing state systems of care for youth in foster care. All made significant progress in developing the key relationships that will move this work forward.

Peds-21 Conference

The TFOFC planned the Peds21 conference on foster care for the 2009 NCE. It was one of the most well-attended Peds21 conferences to date. Staff and member leaders received positive feedback on the conference and have fielded several requests for assistance on how to build

foster care practices as a result of attendance at the conference.

Web site

In October 2009, the task force also launched at the Peds21 conference, the Healthy Foster Care America Web site that includes a resource library searchable by target audience, type of resource, and topic. It contains many helpful resources including forms and tools for office practices. The Web site has had over a million hits and almost 270,000 page views in the year and a half since its launch. Resources for the Web site continue to be developed and updated.

Model Practices

Information has been collected on model practices, both in terms of practice as well as for electronic health record (EHR)/electronic passport use. An affiliated learning collaborative added to this knowledge base and all of the information gathered will be made available to help others as they seek to improve their practices in foster care.

Collaborations Across Disciplines

One of the most gratifying outcomes of the TFOFC's work are the connections that have been made with partner organizations, including the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Child Welfare League of America, Foster Care Alumni of America, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, National Foster Parent Association, and the National Medical Association. The TFOFC partners have contributed significantly to task force efforts and resource development. TFOFC members and partners have spoken at one another's conferences, written for each other's newsletters, shared links and resources, and made themselves available to each other for questions and discussions.

Miscellaneous Efforts

The foregoing list is only a highlight of the main accomplishments of the TFOFC. There have been many other accomplishments, and at the risk of overlooking any, they include: development of foster care modules for the Bright Futures and Medical Home Education in Quality Improvement in Pediatric Practice (EQIPP) offerings; survey of foster parents on medical needs of youth in their care at the annual conference of the National Foster Parent Association; testimony to Congress on several occasions; inclusion of foster care questions on the American Board of Pediatrics certifying exam and informational calls with government officials.