



## Improving Children's Vision in Medicaid

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# National Health Law Program (NHeLP)

The National Health Law Program protects and advances the health rights of low income and underserved individuals. For over 45 years, NHeLP has advocated, educated and litigated at the federal and state levels.

- [www.healthlaw.org](http://www.healthlaw.org)



# The Network for Public Health Law

The Network for Public Health Law provides legal assistance, resources and opportunities to build connections for local, tribal, state and federal officials; public health practitioners; attorneys; policy-makers; and advocates. Organizations and individuals committed to improving public health can join the Network.



Robert Wood Johnson  
Foundation

[www.networkforphl.org](http://www.networkforphl.org)

The Network for Public Health Law is a national initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

# Overview to the session

- Medicaid background
- Early & Periodic Screening, Diagnostic & Treatment
- Exemplary EPSDT policies



# WHAT JUDGES SAY

- “Byzantine construction” makes Medicaid “almost unintelligible to the uninitiated”
- Medicaid Act is “an aggravated assault on the English language”
- Medicaid “regulations so drawn they have created a Serbonian bog”

# Medicaid: Publicly funded health insurance for people with lower incomes

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**LEARN HOW TO  
APPLY FOR  
COVERAGE**



**COMMENT OR VIEW  
PENDING  
DEMONSTRATIONS**

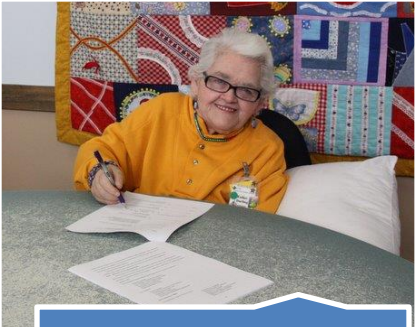


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# Medicaid: Who's eligible?



Children & pregnant women



People over age 65



People with disabilities



Caretaker relatives



Expansion

# Medicaid: What's covered?



- For adults:
  - Mandatory services, e.g. physician, nurse practitioner, hospital, FQHC, home health\*
  - Optional services, e.g. prescribed drugs, dental, prosthetics, rehabilitative
- For children:
  - Early & Periodic, Screening, Diagnostic & Treatment (EPSDT)





# Policy reasons for EPSDT: Low-income children are more likely to have:

- ✓ Vision, hearing and speech problems
- ✓ Untreated tooth decay
- ✓ Elevated lead blood levels
- ✓ Sickle cell disease
- ✓ Behavioral Health problems
- ✓ Asthma
- ✓ Transportation barriers
- ✓ And more . . .





“The EPSDT benefit is more robust than the Medicaid benefit for adults and is designed to assure that children receive early detection and care, so that health problems are averted or diagnosed and treated as early as possible. The goal of EPSDT is to assure that individual children get the health care they need when they need it—the right care to the right child at the right time in the right setting.”

*CMS, EPSDT – A GUIDE FOR STATES: COVERAGE IN THE MEDICAID BENEFIT FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS (June 2014)*

# EPSDT Requirements - Mandatory screening

## Medical Screens

- Health and developmental history
- Unclothed physical exam
- Immunizations
- Lab tests, including lead blood tests
- Health education

# EPSDT Requirements - Mandatory screening

- Additional Required Screens
  - Hearing, including hearing aids
  - Dental, including relief of pain, restoration of teeth and maintenance of dental health
  - Vision, including eyeglasses

# Vision standards & recommendations



# EPSDT Requirements – Treatment

- All services that could be covered under state Medicaid plan (mandatory and optional)
- All Medicaid-covered services necessary to “correct or ameliorate physical and mental illnesses and conditions,” even if the service is not covered under the state plan.

# EPSDT Requirements – Outreach and informing

- Effective and aggressive
  - Oral and written
  - Translated
  - Targeted (e.g. pregnant teens, non-users)
- Transportation and appointment assistance (prior to screen due date)
- Coordination with other entities



# A Word about Medicaid Managed Care

- 74% of Medicaid population
- All states but AK, WY
- High enrollment (>95%): HI, ID, MO, OR, SC, TN, VT

SOURCES: Kaiser Family Foundation ([www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org)); CMS ([www.cms.gov](http://www.cms.gov))



## Case example:

J.C. is an 12-year-old girl who is enrolled in Medicaid. She has always done well in school, academically and socially, However, this academic year, she has complained about school, failed to turn in homework . Her teachers have repeatedly called her mother to say she is not paying attention in class

# Barriers to vision and hearing service delivery



A word cloud illustrating various barriers to vision and hearing service delivery. The words are arranged in a roughly triangular shape, with 'referral' at the bottom and 'distance' at the top left. The words are in different colors and orientations: 'distance' (grey, vertical), 'equipment' (black, vertical), 'language' (teal, horizontal), 'periodicity' (green, horizontal), 'disability' (red, horizontal), 'contract' (teal, horizontal), 'coordination' (grey, horizontal), 'specialist' (black, horizontal), and 'referral' (orange, horizontal).

distance  
equipment  
language  
periodicity  
disability  
contract  
coordination  
specialist  
referral



Department of Health and Human Services

**OFFICE OF  
INSPECTOR GENERAL**

**60%**

**MOST MEDICAID CHILDREN IN  
NINE STATES ARE NOT  
RECEIVING ALL REQUIRED  
PREVENTIVE SCREENING  
SERVICES**



Daniel R. Levinson  
Inspector General

May 2010  
OEI-05-08-00520

# Legal Requirements for Medicaid Coverage

- Laws & policies:
  - NHeLP, *Issue Brief – Vision Services for Children on Medicaid: A Review of EPSDT Services* (May 2015)
- Medicaid Managed care contract provisions:
  - NPHL & NHeLP, *Survey of Medicaid Managed Care Contracts* (May 2015)
- Model Medicaid Managed Care Contract Provisions:
  - NPHL & NHeLP, *EPSDT Vision and Hearing Services* (forthcoming June 2015)

# Vision Periodicity

1/3 states – AAP, *Bright Futures*



## State laws & policies

Wisconsin –

Comprehensive periodic schedule, with  
emphasis on ages 0-5

### **Managed care contracts**

Michigan –

AAP periodicity schedule plus additional  
screens required by court order, foster  
care, or medical necessity

# Vision

## Content of the screen

60% – PCPs who do not perform vision screening

1/3 states – No discussion



### State laws & policies

Kentucky & Wisconsin –

Identify conditions and testing methods

DC –

Visual acuity charts

### Managed care contracts

Illinois–

Incorporates *Handbook for Providers* listing detailed specifications for vision testing

# Vision

## Referral & follow-up

40-67% – screening children who do not receive follow-up



### **State laws & policies**

Illinois--

Quantitative & qualitative referral guidelines

### **Managed care contracts**

Florida –

Vision screening and objective testing with referral and follow up as appropriate

# Vision Monitoring & performance

40-67% – screening children who do not receive  
follow-up



## State laws & policies

Maine, Minnesota --  
Standardized reporting forms

Ohio –  
On-line tracking

## Managed care contracts

Kansas –  
Provides detailed specifications for  
monitoring and tracking screening provided



# Contact information

National Health Law Program

[www.healthlaw.org](http://www.healthlaw.org)

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