



POLICY & PRACTICE

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Grants Fund Performance Measures

Ten states will receive a total of \$100 million in federal grant funds to implement and evaluate provider performance measures and health information technologies in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Eight of the states will test a new set of child health quality measures, and with some overlap, seven will use the funds to implement health information technologies, according to the Department of Health and Human Services. Two states plan to develop a new electronic health record format for pediatrics. The grants, which will be awarded over a period of 5 years, were funded by the CHIP reauthorization legislation approved last year. Colorado, Florida, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Utah will share the money.

Medicaid Enrollment Up in 2009

Nearly 3.3 million more people were enrolled in state Medicaid programs in June 2009 than in the same month in 2008, according to an analysis by the Kaiser Family Foundation. The enroll-

ment increase represented the biggest 1-year hike in enrollment ever, boosting monthly Medicaid enrollment by 7.5% to 46.9 million children and adults. Job losses drove increases in all 50 states, said the foundation's report. A separate Kaiser survey of state Medicaid directors found that 44 states and the District of Columbia are experiencing higher-than-expected program enrollment and increased spending in 2010. And 29 states said they are considering midyear cuts in provider rates and program benefits.

Warning on Omega-3 Supplements

The Federal Trade Commission sent letters to 11 companies that promote various omega-3 fatty acid supplements, warning them not to violate federal law by making baseless claims about how the supplements benefit children's brain and vision function and development. The FTC cautioned the companies that they need scientific evidence to support label claims involving intelligence, cognitive function, learning ability, focus, mood, memory, attention, concentration, visual acuity, and eye health. Without such evidence,

the agency warned, it might take enforcement action. One company, Northwest Natural Products Inc., already has altered the label for its L'il Critters Omega-3 Gummy Fish in response to FTC questions, according to the agency.

HPV Vaccination as Parenting

The decision by parents to have their daughters get the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is more likely to be influenced by parents' own health habits rather than purely medical considerations, according to a study. For example, current and former smokers, as well as parents who get regular exercise, were more likely to say they'd let their daughters get the vaccine. Researchers analyzed survey data from more than 1,300 parents who had daughters under age 18 and had answered the 2007 Health Information National Trends Survey. "Some prior research suggests that risky health behaviors tend to co-occur (i.e., smoking, alcohol use) and are associated with lower uptake of harm prevention strategies, such as vaccinations," lead author Carolyn Y. Fang, Ph.D., said in a statement. "This was not the case in the current study. It may be that parents who are former or current smokers have a heightened awareness of cancer and its related risks, therefore, may be more willing to vaccinate their daughters to prevent cancer." The study was published in the February issue of *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*.

Pediatricians Join Antiobesity Campaign

The American Academy of Pediatrics is collaborating with First Lady Michelle Obama on her initiative against childhood obesity. At a White House launch of the campaign in February, a high-level Obama administration task force was charged with creating a detailed policy plan by May. For its part, the AAP said it would urge pediatricians to calculate body mass index for every child at every well-child visit. "BMI is a simple but important tool in starting a conversation with families about their children's health and well-being," AAP President Judith Palfrey said at the launch. In addition, the AAP will prod pediatricians to provide weight and

obesity information to parents at all well-child checkups. That should include specifics about how to achieve a healthy weight for children, such as prescriptions for good nutrition and physical activity, Dr. Palfrey said. Said Mrs. Obama, "The physical and emotional health of an entire generation and the economic health and security of our nation is at stake."

Dissolvable Tobacco Info Sought

The Food and Drug Administration's Center for Tobacco Products got right to work after its launch last August. In February, the center sent letters to several tobacco companies, asking them to submit "a comprehensive and detailed summary" of research on their dissolvable smokeless tobacco products. The products "resemble candy," according to the letters, and concerns about them include their use by people under age 26, potential misuse of the products, and accidental ingestion. The center said it wants the information to prepare for a meeting of the Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee. The letters expressed concern "that children and adolescents may find dissolvable tobacco products particularly appealing, given the brightly colored packaging, candylike appearance, and easily concealable size of many of these products."

Healthy Food Financing Proposed

In an effort to bring better foods to communities that are known as "food deserts" because of their lack of healthy options, the Obama administration has proposed targeting \$400 million in tax credits, low-rate loans, loan guarantees, and grants. If Congress approves the Healthy Food Financing Initiative as part of the federal budget, the funds will support projects ranging from grocery store construction to smaller interventions such as placing refrigerators stocked with fresh produce in convenience stores. Nationwide, the Department of Agriculture estimates that 23.5 million people, including 6.5 million children, live in low-income food deserts that are more than a mile from a supermarket. These areas typically are served by fast-food restaurants and small stores that offer little or no fresh produce.

—Jane Anderson

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