

POLICY & PRACTICE

2007 Budget: Mostly Cuts for Kids

More cuts are slated for Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program under the president's fiscal year 2007 budget request. In an effort to reduce the deficit, the administration has proposed changes that would result in \$13.5 billion in cuts over 5 years to Medicaid/SCHIP. One legislative proposal that would get increased funding is Cover the Kids, a grant program that would promote enrollment of eligible children in Medicaid and SCHIP. The president called for a \$69 million increase for the program in 2007, and

\$330 million over 5 years. Cuts for children's programs are slated in other areas of the budget: The request for the Health Resources and Services Administration, for example, contains no money for emergency medical services for children, which in the past has been funded at \$20 million.

Suit Alleges Junk-Food Brainwashing

Consumer groups and parents are suing Nickelodeon and Kellogg Co. in an attempt to stop the companies from marketing junk food to children. The announcement follows an Institute of

Medicine report which found that food advertising aimed at children encourages them to request high-calorie, low-nutrient foods. "Nickelodeon and Kellogg engage in business practices that literally sicken our children," said Michael F. Jacobson, executive director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, one of the plaintiffs. "Their marketing tactics are designed to convince kids that everything they hear from their parents about food is wrong. It's a multimedia brainwashing and reeducation campaign—and a disease-promoting one at that." Other plaintiffs in the suit include the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood and parents Sherri Carlson

of Wakefield, Mass., and Andrew Leong of Brookline, Mass. Kellogg is not commenting at this point, said Jill Saletta, Kellogg's director for communications.

Neighborhood Weight Watch?

It pays to know your neighbors: A recent study published in the journal, *Social Science & Medicine* found that children who grew up in close-knit neighborhoods were less likely to be obese. Researchers surveyed 807 adolescents in 684 households in 65 neighborhoods in Los Angeles County, Calif., and sampled 3,000 adult respondents. They found a significant relationship between collective efficacy or the "willingness of community members to look out for each other and intervene when trouble arises," and body mass index, being at risk of overweight, and overweight status. "Future interventions to control weight by addressing the social environment at the community level may be promising," the researchers concluded.

Steroid Abuse Prevention Award

Oregon Health and Science University in Portland is the recipient of the first annual \$1 million SI Champion Award from *Sports Illustrated* magazine for its work on preventing steroid abuse by high school athletes. "Based on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's latest information (2003), approximately 850,000 high school students have admitted using steroids," *Sports Illustrated* noted in a statement. "Since 1993, steroid use among this age group has increased from one in every 45 to one in 16." To help combat the problem, the university created two programs: ATLAS (Athletes Training and Learning to Avoid Steroids) for high school males and ATHENA (Athletes Targeting Healthy Exercise and Nutrition Alternatives) for high school females. Both programs focus on healthy nutrition and exercise as alternatives to harmful behaviors, and both have been shown to reduce the use of steroids as well as other drugs and alcohol. The university will receive cash and public service announcements in the magazine totaling \$1 million to create a network of schools that will serve as national models for the two programs.

Depression Prevails in Teens

Earlier interventions are needed to address childhood onset of mental health disorders, Missy Fleming, Ph.D., program director for child and adolescent health for the American Medical Association, said at a meeting of the National Institute for Health Care Management Foundation. "We need to develop a stronger infrastructure and policies to promote and support healthy psychological development," she said. This involves increasing access to interventions that are likely to reduce the burdens of untreated mental disorders; linking assessment services to prevention and treatment, especially those that are sensitive to cultural needs; and enlisting primary care physicians, schools, and community resources to meet adolescent and young adult mental health needs. Major depressive disorder is common during childhood with an estimated prevalence of 2%-5% for adolescents aged 13-18 years. This problem increases through young adulthood, she said.

—Jennifer Lubell

There's only one anti-diarrheal brand indicated for children 6-11.^{1,2}

Elizabeth 6 years old



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