

Medicaid Well-Child Visits

Comprehensive Exam Guidelines Include Mental Health Screening

Medicaid – The Early and Periodic, Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment Benefit (EPSDT)

- Congress created the EPSDT benefit in 1967 to respond to high rates of preventable illness in children. This benefit outlines the components of a comprehensive well-child visit under Medicaid, and provides for any medically necessary follow-up care.
- A mental health screen in adolescence is required to be offered during the well-child visit, and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) State Medicaid Manual provides further guidance:

For Adolescents, the orientation should encompass such areas of special concern as potential presence of learning disabilities, peer relations, psychological / psychiatric problems, and vocational skills.

- CMS State Medicaid Manual

- The EPSDT benefit became a required component of state Medicaid programs in the Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1989.
- Federal statutes and regulations have clearly established that the EPSDT well-child visit is to be made available to all beneficiaries at established intervals meeting reasonable standards of medical practice as determined by the State after consultation with medical organizations.

The consensus of medical professional groups is to provide annual well-visits to children ages 10 through 20.

States' Provision of Comprehensive EPSDT Well-Visits is Low

- States are required to report the participation rate for Medicaid well-child visits to CMS each year.
- In 2007, more than 23 million young people were eligible for a Medicaid well-child visit, but just 13.3 million screenings took place.

For adolescents and teens – the ages when the first signs of mental illness often appear – the average participation rate for Medicaid well-child visits was just 43 percent in 2007.

- Just 15 states had participation rates greater than 50 percent in 2007, and 6 states had participation rates of less than 25 percent.
- While guidelines call for annual well-visits, many states offer fewer screenings.

States' Provision of Mental Health Screening is Extremely Low

- CMS does not currently require states to report on the number of mental health screenings provided, and we do not have reliable data on the number of mental health screenings provided by Medicaid.

A study by HHS' Office of the Inspector General estimated that only 28% of children enrolled in Medicaid managed care received all prescribed screens.

- Office of the Inspector General, HHS, 1997

- However, the recent implementation of Yolanda's Law and the Rosie D. remedial plan in Massachusetts provide an example of a successful, statewide screening model.