



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Health

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Health Services Newsletter

HELPING FAMILIES ACCESS MEDICAL CARE

Each year, Head Start and Early Head Start play a critical role in helping families routinely access proper medical and dental care. Families may be uninsured, lack access to medical providers, or choose emergency rooms as their source of care. As a health manager it is your responsibility to ensure each child has an identified medical and dental provider, has medical insurance, and routinely accesses healthcare according to the [Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment \(EPSDT\)](#) schedule- all within the first 90 days (30 days for programs with durations of 90 days or less) a child is enrolled in your program. You can use this responsibility to also help families to build ongoing, trusting relationships with their medical home for optimal child health. A positive, consistent relationship allows a health care provider to become knowledgeable about existing health conditions and family risk factors in order to provide more informed care and counseling. Families are able to build confidence in the services provided for their child. This relationship is integral to building a healthy foundation for children to learn and grow. Remember, **school readiness begins with health!**

YOUR PROGRAM SHOULD HAVE:

1. A record of each child's health examinations according to the EPSDT schedule.
2. A record of recommended and completed follow-up care.
3. A record of health referrals made and if they were used.
4. Documentation that records were reviewed with parents and kept confidential.
5. Procedures to track the health services provided.
6. A policy describing how your program will facilitate transitions for families.



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SUPPORTING STAFF

In many programs the family service worker or home visitor may be responsible for helping families apply for insurance, identify a medical and dental home, and navigate the health care system. As a health manager it is important to support these staff in their work with families. You can:

- Maintain a roster of medical and dental care providers that accept Medicaid-eligible children.
- Collaborate with the Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) to identify potential providers, sources of funding for health services, and ways to inform community health providers about the health needs of Head Start families.
- Partner with staff working directly with children with special health care needs and/or disabilities to develop a plan to help families to address health concerns.
- Provide parent health education.
- Develop a communication system to notify parents of possible health concerns.

The family's relationship with their medical home will provide benefits long after their experience in Head Start.

FOR YOUR FAMILY NEWSLETTER

YOU CAN TAILOR THE FOLLOWING TO INCLUDE IN YOUR FAMILY NEWSLETTER

Being healthy is a big part of getting ready for school. We are here to help! Please contact XXX for help applying for health insurance, finding a healthcare provider, keeping up with all your child's medical appointments or if you just want to ask some questions. Our health services are designed to support you as you navigate the health care system.

ENGAGING FAMILIES IN HEALTH SERVICES

Engaging families in preventative health care can be a challenge for the Head Start/Early Head Start health manager. Many families have multiple obstacles and it can be difficult making health a priority when their child is healthy. Your role as health manager is to explain the importance of routine, preventative medical care, assist families when accessing care, and empower them to **become an active partner with their child's medical and dental home.**

Help families make their child's health a priority.

- Discuss with families what they can expect during the next well-child visit. Is their child due for immunizations?
- Help them prepare questions to take with them for their next appointment.
- Remind families of follow-up appointments and care.
- Follow-up with families to discuss their medical questions or concerns.
- Collaborate with your Policy Council or Parent Committee to address the needs of parents and encourage parent involvement. Parents are often interested in hearing the similar struggles and possible solutions of other parents.



WHAT NEXT?

You have dedicated the first 90 days (30 days for programs with durations of 90 days or less) after enrollment for each child to ensure every child has access to a medical and dental provider and is up to date on well child visits and immunizations. You can now focus on helping families maintain health as a priority for their child. Continue to provide support and education regarding the importance of a medical and dental provider, well-child care according to the EPSDT schedule, and building a relationship with their medical and dental home. This should include regular follow-up with the family to encourage communication with health care providers as well as using referrals and recommendations from the medical and dental home. Engage your family service worker to partner with families regarding health needs during the family partnership agreement. Look for ways to support both family service worker and the family in reaching these goals.

The child's health care provider may raise health or development concerns and recommend an evaluation for the child. Your role is to help families use the referral providing further evaluation and follow up. Take time to discuss the family's concerns and help them navigate the health care system in partnership with the medical home. You can collaborate with the disabilities coordinator as well as other staff to ensure families are able to access needed medical care.

What is a well-child visit?

Well-child care aims to keep children healthy and identify health concerns as early as possible. When children's health needs are identified and met early on, they have better health and developmental outcomes.

Well-child care requires a collaborative partnership between families, medical homes, and Head Start to ensure every child enrolled in Head Start receives recommended screenings, examinations, immunizations, follow-up, diagnosis, and treatment.

Well-child care includes:

- Review of the child's health history
- Screening tests to identify health concerns
- Physical examination
- Follow-up and treatment
- Health education

In addition, the Head Start Program Performance Standards require a determination by a health care professional a child is up-to-date on a schedule of well-child care.

You can find a schedule of this care from the Health Department in your state- [The Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment \(EPSDT\)](#) program of your state Medicaid agency. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issues [immunization recommendations](#). The Indian Health Service also provides guidelines for well-child care. For states that do not have a Medicaid EPSDT schedule, the AAP Bright Futures recommends a schedule of well-child care for children birth to 5 years.

RESOURCES

ECLKC Resources

1. [EPSDT Schedule by State](#)
2. [Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment \(EPSDT\) Benefits](#)
3. [Recommendations for Preventive Pediatric Health Care](#)
4. [Effective Partnerships Guide: Improving Oral Health for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Children and their Families](#)

Other Resources

1. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Immunization Schedule](#)
2. [Indian Health Service Head Start Program](#)
3. [Migrant Health Promotion](#)
4. [National Center for Farmworker Health](#)
5. [Bright Futures](#)

Fostering a culture of health and wellness for Head Start children, families, and staff.

NATIONAL CENTER ON HEALTH

Our Goal:

To help Head Start and Early Head Start programs implement best practices and effective approaches within medical and dental care access, health awareness, healthy active living, emergency preparedness, and environmental safety to support healthy outcomes and school readiness for young children and their families.

CONTACT US!

The National Center on Health welcomes your feedback on this newsletter issue as well as your suggestions for topics for future issues. Please forward your comments to nchinfo@aap.org or call (888) 227-5125.

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School Readiness begins with Health!

