

February 8, 2010
Testimony
Medical Inefficiency Committee

Children make up 54 percent of Medicaid enrollees in Connecticut and all of them are covered under Medicaid's Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) Program. The EPSDT Program was designed by Congress to meet the health care needs of poor children who are less likely to be in good health and more likely to suffer from poor birth outcomes, chronic health problems like asthma, cognitive problems and developmental delays, poor nutrition, lead poisoning, mental health conditions, and vision and hearing problems. The EPSDT benefit is built upon on timely access to well-child care (EPSDT screening exams), early detection of health care problems, and treatment for health care problems, whether pre-existing or newly diagnosed in the course of care. Under EPSDT, treatment for health conditions should be determined on an individual basis and should depend on whether the services are medically necessary to correct or ameliorate a defect or condition. Children's services are not subject to arbitrary limits to the amount, duration or scope of treatment that can be imposed on Medicaid coverage for adults.

My years of monitoring the HUSKY Program have led me to understand that this broad federal guarantee for children in Medicaid is a tool for advocacy generally and for negotiation on behalf of individual children as their needs arise. Ensuring that children's health care needs are met requires constant vigilance and intervention when needed. Any change to Connecticut's definition of medically necessary care, if adopted, should be done in such a way that EPSDT is not undermined. Further, it is critically important that providers, parents, community service providers, and advocates understand the breadth of EPSDT for ensuring that individual children receive the health services they need.

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