

Aligning Early Childhood and Medicaid: Project Overview and Site Activities

The health care system is often the first social sector to connect with the at-risk population of infants in families with low incomes, with Medicaid covering more than half of all births in many states. However, in most states, the connection between health care and early childhood is often more tenuous than it should be, and the potential of these two systems working together to support early childhood is largely untapped. Advancing greater alignment between Medicaid and early childhood-serving agencies is critical to identifying upstream opportunities that reduce adverse childhood experiences.



The Learning Group

[*Aligning Early Childhood and Medicaid*](#) (AECM), a national initiative made possible by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, will seek to enhance alignment across Medicaid and state agencies responsible for early childhood programs with the goal of improving the health and social outcomes of infants, young children, and families with low incomes. This multi-state learning group, led by the Center for Health Care Strategies in partnership with the National Association of Medicaid Directors and ZERO TO THREE, is bringing together eight Medicaid leaders with select counterparts from state agencies teams responsible for a wide range of early childhood programs including, but not limited to, child welfare; home visiting; and early education. Through this 20-month initiative participating states will:

1. **Align state programs between Medicaid and other early childhood systems** to drive more strategic, evidence-based investments for infants and toddlers (ages 0-3) in families with low incomes; and
2. **Demonstrate the value of early childhood cross-sector alignment**, for improving near- and long-term health and social outcomes.

Participating states will receive tailored technical assistance and participate in peer learning opportunities to exchange and accelerate solutions across states. CHCS will distill lessons from the states' early childhood cross-sector efforts and share emerging best practices nationally.

State AECM Plans

The *Aligning Early Childhood and Medicaid* initiative includes eight states with a demonstrated commitment to improving the health and social outcomes of low-income infants, young children, and families. Below are brief descriptions of each states' proposed project activities:

- **Colorado** will explore how to increase the use of benefits included under Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) by mapping and understanding billable services and codes. In addition, they will focus on increasing outreach to those not engaged in the health care system to improve utilization of community systems.
- **Minnesota** will explore ways to reduce the number of out of home placements for children under age two, with a particular focus on pregnant women, and African American and American Indian children, as well as identify opportunities to increase collaboration between Medicaid and child welfare.

- **New Jersey** will adopt best practice standards to identify social-emotional, behavioral, and social determinant health risks in the pediatric medical home. They will also develop a strategy to provide infant mental health services and expand the use of care coordination and community health workers for new mothers.
- **New York** will focus on improving communication between medical providers and home visiting interventions. The specific objective will be to improve the rate of referrals from providers to home visiting programs, as well as develop and pilot policy strategies for Medicaid reimbursement. This is a core plank to the state's *First 1,000 Days on Medicaid* initiative.
- **Oregon** will complete the development, testing, and implementation of a social-emotional development measure to be included in Oregon's quality incentive program for its coordinated care organizations.
- **Rhode Island** will monitor statewide adherence to the Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) schedule and establish a process for assessing provider performance. Additional efforts will include increasing coordination with the health care system and Medicaid.
- **Vermont** will work with its accountable care organization to implement universal screening for health and social risks, brief intervention, and supports within the context of early childhood education, home visiting programs, and pediatric medical care to increase access to and entry into timely and appropriate services for families.
- **Washington** will develop a cross-agency systems alignment to improve services, supports, and opportunities to create a comprehensive risk and resilience screening, with in-time assistance connecting to community services, supports, and opportunities that support positive health and family functioning outcomes.

ABOUT THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION

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ABOUT THE CENTER FOR HEALTH CARE STRATEGIES

The Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS) is a nonprofit policy center dedicated to improving the health of low-income Americans. It works with state and federal agencies, health plans, providers, and consumer groups to develop and spread innovative programs to better serve Medicaid beneficiaries. For more information, visit www.chcs.org.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAID DIRECTORS

The national association of medicaid directors (namd) is a bipartisan, nonprofit, professional organization representing leaders of state medicaid agencies across the country. Namd members drive major innovations in health care while overseeing medicaid, one of the nation's most vital health care safety net programs, which covers nearly 68 million americans. Namd serves as the voice for state medicaid directors in national policy discussions, supports state-driven policies and practices that strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of medicaid and actively monitors emerging issues in medicaid and health care policy. Learn more at <http://www.medicaiddirectors.org>.

ABOUT ZERO TO THREE

ZERO TO THREE works to ensure all babies and toddlers benefit from the family and community connections critical to their well-being and development. Since 1977, the organization has advanced the proven power of nurturing relationships by transforming the science of early childhood into helpful resources, practical tools and responsive policies for millions of parents, professionals and policymakers. For more information, and to learn how to become a ZERO TO THREE member, please visit zerotothree.org, facebook.com/zerotothree, or follow @ZEROTOTHREE on twitter.