

Health Issues



Connecticut Health
FOUNDATION

IMPACT OF INCREASED DENTAL REIMBURSEMENT RATES ON HUSKY A-INSURED CHILDREN: 2006 – 2011

OVERVIEW

Over the past few decades Connecticut children enrolled in HUSKY A (Healthcare for Uninsured Kids and Youth), the state's Medicaid program for low-income families, could not easily access dental health services for a variety of reasons including low private dentist participation. Many providers cited low reimbursement rates and cumbersome program administration as obstacles to treating children insured under Medicaid. Based on a 2008 lawsuit settlement agreement, program administration improved and reimbursement rates increased, moving closer to private insurance rates. An examination of Medicaid data between 2006 and 2011 will illustrate the impact of these changes on utilization rates, private dentist participation, and the relative contributions of private practices and dental safety net providers.

FINDINGS

1. Higher Medicaid reimbursement rates and improved administrative structure encouraged many more private practice dentists to treat children insured under HUSKY A.

- Utilization rates of children continuously enrolled in HUSKY A increased from 46 percent in 2006 to nearly 70 percent in 2011.
- Nearly all of Connecticut's 169 cities and towns, including the ten with the greatest concentration of children on HUSKY A, experienced significant utilization rate increases.
- Increased private dentist participation in the Medicaid program directly contributed to greater access to oral health services among low-income children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Children's access to dental care is linked to robust private provider participation in the Medicaid program and a strong dental safety net system. To ensure continued access to basic oral health services among low-income children insured under HUSKY A:

- Medicaid reimbursement rates must be periodically adjusted to mirror private insurance rates.
- The administrative structure and processes of the Medicaid dental program must remain streamlined.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

The 2011 utilization rate among children continuously enrolled in HUSKY A is similar to the rate of 65 percent for children enrolled in private insurance plans.

Approximately half of all pediatric and general dental practitioners now provide care in the Medicaid dental program.

More than twice as many children received treatment services in 2011 than 2006.

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