



Care for Georgia's Kids: Modernizing Medicaid and PeachCare for Kids™

Ensuring that Medicaid and PeachCare for Kids™ are strong and structured to best meet the needs of Georgia's children requires the deliberate engagement of the advocacy community, particularly since these programs are frequently targeted for budget cuts. With that in mind, Voices for Georgia's Children and Georgians for a Healthy Future commissioned a study with the purpose of putting a special focus on opportunities to improve insurance coverage and healthcare services. The report, titled "*Modernizing Medicaid and PeachCare for Kids: Promising Program Design Options for Georgia's Children*", shows us that Georgia can greatly increase the number of children covered and keep children covered while also trimming administrative costs and improving quality outcomes. To read the report in its entirety, visit www.healthyfuturega.org/issues/careforgeorgiaskids.

As we look ahead to potential policy changes for Medicaid and PeachCare, our goal is to ensure that any changes rely upon best practices in coverage, access, and quality to ensure all of Georgia's children get the healthcare services they need. The following recommendations address ways to increase access, coverage and quality.

1. **Simplify Eligibility**

Studies show that children with continuous coverage have better outcomes than those who do not. DCH can make getting and keeping coverage easier by allowing electronic verification during the enrollment process, offering express lane eligibility at application or renewal and moving to a 12-month continuous eligibility system. This will not only make it easier for families to get coverage but will also cut down the administrative burden associated with eligibility process.

2. **Improve Access to Specialty Care**

Getting coverage is only half the battle—making sure that coverage leads to access is critical to improving health outcomes. In many parts of the state, finding a provider that accepts Medicaid and PeachCare is sometimes difficult and even more so if a specialist is needed. DCH can adjust provider reimbursement rates for specialty care while also exploring technological advances (i.e. telemedicine) that can reach coverage gaps across the state.

3. **Ensure Access to Coordinated Care**

Ensuring that children have a medical home and a primary care provider can make coordinating all aspects of care (both physical and behavioral) easier. The use of electronic health records has yielded positive results in other states and would allow for better data-driven performance tracking as well as ensuring that timely and appropriate care is received.

4. **Strengthen Accountability**

Providers as well as care management organizations should be held accountable for performance on health measures. Increasing standards around childhood immunization and lead screening, for example, would bring Georgia in line with national standards. Additionally, adding more well-child visits for older children would signal a commitment to children's health and ultimately lead to healthier children.

5. **Use All Available Resources**

There are many opportunities to improve the access, coverage and quality of healthcare for children in Georgia and to properly address them, DCH should pursue both public and private grants and make the most out of opportunities to improve the current Medicaid and PeachCare systems.