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Follow-Up: Children in Medi-Cal

The Department of Health Care Services Is Still Not Doing Enough to Ensure That Children in Medi-Cal Receive Preventive Health Services

Background

Approximately half of California’s children receive medical care through the California Medical Assistance Program (Medi-Cal). Our analysis of data for nearly the past decade reveals that less than 50 percent of those children in Medi-Cal have received the required preventive health care services that would help ensure that they live healthier, more productive lives. In March 2019, our office issued report 2018-111 regarding the Department of Health Care Services’ (DHCS) oversight of the delivery of preventive services to children in Medi-Cal, and this report follows up on DHCS’s efforts to implement the 2019 recommendations.

Key Findings

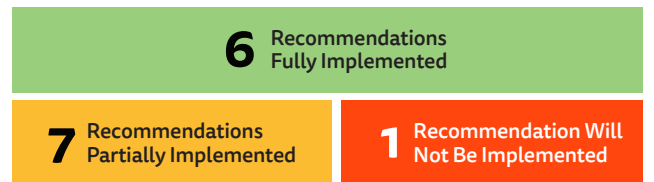
- DHCS has made some progress in implementing the 2019 recommendations, but it has yet to fully implement eight of the 14 recommendations.
- Many of DHCS’s efforts to improve its oversight of the provision of children’s preventive services were placed on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic and should now be reinstated and improved upon.

Key Recommendations

DHCS should continue to implement the outstanding eight recommendations we made in 2019:

- Monitor and identify effective incentive programs and share the results with all the health plans responsible for providing children’s preventive health care services.
- Require health plans to identify barriers to usage and hold the plans accountable to address the barriers they identify.
- Require its External Quality Review Organization (external reviewer) to perform annual data validation studies using the most recent set of data available.
- Revise the methodology for health disparity studies to enable better demographic comparisons and use the findings to drive targeted interventions.
- Create an action plan to annually address all of its external reviewer’s recommendations, including any outstanding recommendations from prior years.
- Include clearer and more comprehensive information about children’s preventive health care services in its written materials and ensure annual follow-up with those who have not used the services.
- Ensure that provider directories are at least 95 percent accurate before approving them.
- Identify where more children’s health care providers are needed and propose to the Legislature funding increases to recruit more providers in underserved areas.

DHCS Has Not Fully Implemented 8 of the 14 Recommendations We Made in 2019



- 1 Monitor and Identify Incentive Programs
- 2 Identify Barriers to Usage
- 3 Perform Data Validation
- 4 Mitigate Health Disparities
- 5 Address External Reviewers’ Recommendations
- 6 Improve Beneficiary Outreach
- 7 Ensure That Provider Directories Are Accurate
- 8 Increase Access to Providers

DHCS Performed Limited Outreach.

Outreach for Children Under Age Seven
Your child is entitled to critical health services:

- Immunizations
- Blood lead screenings
- Physical exam

Screenings for concerns with:

- Dental
- Vision
- Hearing
- Development
- Mental health
- Nutrition