

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



NH Chapter

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Mary Vallier-Kaplan, co-chair
Governor's Commission on Medicaid Care Management
95A Steele Road
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Don Shumway, co-chair
Governor's Commission on Medicaid Care Management
President and CEO Crotched Mountain Rehabilitation Center
One Verney Drive
Greenfield NH 03047

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing in the interest of New Hampshire children who are covered by Medicaid and whose mothers are covered by Medicaid during pregnancy and for several weeks after delivery.

It is clear that great care is being taken to ensure that high-quality, cost-effective services are covered for all populations and that these services are provided through patient-centered medical homes as Medicaid transitions from a fee-for-service model to a managed care model. Medical expenses for children make up a minority of Medicaid costs. However, how those dollars are spent can have an enormous beneficial impact on children's health throughout their lifespan. In particular, home visiting programs during pregnancy, infancy and early childhood have been shown to improve physical and emotional health and cognitive development. Studies show that when home visits begin during a mother's pregnancy, there are fewer preterm births and fewer infants born with low birth weights. Furthermore, home visits are associated with a decreased incidence of maternal depression and an increased rate of breastfeeding. This translates into better parenting skills; improved child development and school readiness; and a reduction in abuse and neglect. When home visiting is integrated with a patient-centered medical home, optimal effectiveness is realized. A home visit before a health maintenance visit results in fewer missed appointments, lower use of the Emergency Department, fewer illness visits and fewer hospitalizations. Mothers become better at overcoming obstacles to seeking care for their children, better at retaining anticipatory guidance and more satisfied with their children's medical care. There are fewer childhood injuries and accidental ingestions, more health maintenance visits for 1 year olds, better immunization rates and improved dental care. When there is integration of home visitation with the medical home, children are more likely to enroll in and continue with Early Supports and Services to address developmental issues before they become entrenched and impair a child's social, emotional and educational progress.

For these important medical, developmental and economic reasons, I urge the Governor's Commission on Medicaid Care Management to ensure that home visiting programs are part of the health services covered by the managed care organizations that contract for Medicaid services. The future for our children and our state will be greatly enhanced by this small up-front investment.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Prazar".

Greg Prazar, MD FAAP
President, New Hampshire Pediatric Society

reference: T Adirim and L Supplee, Eds, "New Developments in Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting," Pediatrics, Volume 132, Supplement 2, November 2013.