

Caring for Kids in a Managed Care Environment

Facing the Challenge

Today's managed health plans find themselves striving to meet new, stricter market and legal demands. And while this does provide health care professionals with unique challenges, it also provides an important opportunity to collaborate with health plans in assuring children of timely, quality emergency care. *Your position and expertise can help ensure that children in your community and across the country have access to the entire spectrum of emergency services, including primary prevention of illness and injury, acute care, and rehabilitation.*

Pediatric Emergency Care — It's No Good if They Can't Get It

Under pressure to control costs, many of today's health plans have established procedures that redirect acutely ill or injured children from the emergency medical services (EMS) system to sites such as their primary care physician's office. The EMSC program supports and promotes the concept of accessible, quality primary care, and a "medical home" for every child. However, it is equally important that a quality emergency care system be accessible to children and families -- and that efforts to reduce inappropriate use of emergency care do not lead to restrictions in *appropriate* and *necessary* use.

Your efforts are needed to ensure that children and families have:

Access

- **Access to emergency medical services 24 hours a day**

Health plans must provide access to emergency medical services 24 hours a day. Financial and procedural barriers that may delay necessary emergency care must be reduced.

- **Access to 9-1-1 or local emergency numbers**

Health plans should encourage members to call 9-1-1 or the local EMS number when they believe their child is suffering from a life-threatening condition, a condition that may become more serious without rapid care, or one that may lead to permanent impairment.

- **Access to pediatric specialty care**

The health plan should have a large network of physicians available -- including specialists from all fields -- trained in the care of children. Hospitals, outpatient centers, and physician's offices should be equipped and staff trained to handle common childhood emergencies.



Pediatric Emergency Care — Quality Counts

The evolving delivery system must include mechanisms for continually monitoring and improving the quality of children's emergency medical care.

- **Accreditation standards and performance measures**

Your unique experience and knowledge makes you an excellent prevention spokesperson. *Offer to share your experiences and knowledge in a public service announcement, newsletter article, newspaper editorial, or school assembly.*

- **Clinical guidelines**

Some plans have their physicians and nurses follow guidelines to determine the site and method of treatment and to improve the overall quality of care delivered. *You can work to ensure that the unique needs of children are incorporated into the clinical guidelines that health plans adopt.*

- **Injury/Illness prevention**

Injury is the leading cause of death in the United States for children and young adults. Health plans should be encouraged to participate in wellness promotion activities that not only include illness prevention but injury prevention as well. *Help your community's health plans design programs that seek to prevent injuries and promote healthy behavior.*

We Can Help!

For more information on EMSC managed care activities -- or on the EMSC Program -- please contact:

- **Children with special health care needs**

Many health plans care for children with special health care needs such as asthma, cerebral palsy, and traumatic brain injury. It is important that the children benefit from a "seamless system" of care which includes: pre-hospital provider training; linkages with specialized and primary care services; early referral to rehabilitation services after an acute illness or injury; and a smooth transition to home. *You can help develop clinical care guidelines that integrate all of these important elements.*

Building a Strong Foundation for EMSC in Managed Care - You Have An Important Role

Caring for children in today's managed care environment presents many challenges. Take advantage of your unique position in the health care debate to ensure that children have 24 hour access to emergency care; that health plans support care for children in the most appropriate setting; that colleagues are well trained in the special needs of children; and that the appropriate health care professionals provide follow-up care.

Quality

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