

## EPSDT AND CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS

EPSDT stands for Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment. It is a federally required Medicaid benefit that ensures all children under 21, who are enrolled in Medicaid, receive preventive screenings and comprehensive health services in the amount, scope, and duration they need to develop and thrive.<sup>1</sup>



### CYSHCN

Each Medicaid state plan specifies the federally mandatory and optional state services that a state covers for its enrollees.<sup>1</sup> However, EPSDT requires Medicaid programs to cover any service that is deemed medically necessary for an enrollee under age 21, whether or not it is included in the Medicaid state plan. EPSDT is a way to ensure adequacy of coverage for children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN).<sup>1</sup>

### PAYERS & POLICYMAKERS

By law, EPSDT covers all medically necessary services.<sup>1</sup> The law does not define medical necessity, however, and the definition varies by state. In general, medically necessary services are those that: improve health or lessen the impact of a condition, prevent a condition, or cure/restore health. The comprehensive and individualized nature of EPSDT is critical for CYSHCN, who, by definition, use more health care services than children typically do.<sup>3</sup>



### FAMILIES

In addition to covering a broad array of health care services, EPSDT requires Medicaid programs to provide parent education regarding the EPSDT benefit. Parents are also entitled to receive help in accessing services that are covered under EPSDT, like transportation, assistance with scheduling appointments, as well as assistance in securing uncovered services.<sup>2</sup>

### PROVIDERS

Under EPSDT, Medicaid must pay for physical, mental, developmental, dental, hearing, vision, and other tests to screen for and identify potential health problems. Follow-up diagnostic tests to rule out or confirm a diagnosis, and treatments to control, correct, or reduce identified health problems should also be covered.



## CATALYST CENTER RESOURCES



### Medicaid Tutorial: EPSDT

This tutorial module examines the history of EPSDT, the importance of EPSDT in coverage for CYSHCN, and types of services covered by EPSDT.

<https://ciswh.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Medicaid-Tutorial-Section12-2017.pdf>



### State Financing Strategies

This page links to examples of innovative strategies states are using to improve and finance care for CYSHCN, like state EPSDT coordinators.

<https://ciswh.org/project/the-catalyst-center/financing-strategy/epsdt/>



### Glossary of Health Care Financing Terms

The glossary is designed to clarify terms and concepts used in health care financing, such as EPSDT.

<https://ciswh.org/projects/the-catalyst-center/glossary/>

**DEFINING CYSHCN:** According to the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau, CYSHCN are those who have or are at increased risk for chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional conditions, and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally.<sup>3</sup>

## CITATIONS

- Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. (2014). EPSDT – A Guide for States: Coverage in the Medicaid Benefit for Children and Adolescents. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [https://www.medicare.gov/medicaid/benefits/downloads/epsdt\\_coverage\\_guide.pdf](https://www.medicare.gov/medicaid/benefits/downloads/epsdt_coverage_guide.pdf)
- The Commonwealth Fund. (2005). EPSDT: An overview. Washington, DC: The Commonwealth Fund.
- McPherson, M., Arango, P., Fox, H., Lauer, C., McManus, M., Newacheck, P., Perrin, J., Shonkoff, J., & Strickland, B. (1998). A new definition of children with special health care needs. *Pediatrics*, 102(1):137-140.

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