

Adolescent Health Matters

Adolescent patients are less likely, than any other age group, to access primary care services despite increased risk for morbidities and mortality from behaviors such as substance use, sexual activity, interpersonal violence, and suicide. While these high-risk behaviors are common among adolescents, less than 20% receive recommended screening and counseling from their healthcare providers. Moreover, while adolescents have healthcare needs and developmental characteristics that differ from other age groups, they remain the most likely to be uninsured, and the least likely to access primary healthcare compared to other age groups. These issues are compounded for adolescents with a special health care need whose medical care involves multiple specialists, providers, vendors and payor sources.

In previous studies, adolescents have reported reluctance to seek health care services because of apprehension about provider compliance with confidentiality as well as the sensitivity and perceived respectfulness of providers and staff. Research has shown provider perspective and behavior can influence the satisfaction of their adolescent patients and the likelihood that adolescents will continue seeking healthcare treatment. Concurrently, national surveys of physicians, nurses, social workers, and other health professionals have identified gaps in self-perceived skills, competencies, and training related to adolescent health.

The Georgia Department of Public Health partners with the Georgia Academy of Family Physicians to ensure members receive ongoing training on various Department initiatives and programs, including providing quality care for the adolescent patient. For the past five years, there have been several training opportunities via conference lectures and webinars to discuss the importance of transitioning youth and young adults with special health care needs from a pediatric to adult model of care. Tools, assessments, and best practices have been shared with training attendees to improve the skills and competencies related to adolescent health. The most recent training was offered during GAFP's Fall conference, where a speaker from the Adolescent Health Initiative provided a lecture on practical tools and resources for improving engagement with adolescent patients.

We're Here to Help. There are Additional Resources Available!

1. Health Care Transition Planning for Adolescent Patients with Special Health Care Needs.
 - Resources from the Children's Medical Services (CMS) program
 - Health Care Transition webpage, <https://dph.georgia.gov/transitioning-youth-adult-care>
 - Family/Caregiver and Youth/Young Adult educational materials
 - Health care transition planning for eligible youth/young adults ages 12 years of age and older

2. Transforming Your Health Practice into an Adolescent-Centered Medical Home,
 - Resources from the Adolescent Health Initiative (AHI) <https://www.umhs-adolescenthealth.org/>

- [Adolescent-Centered Environment Assessment Process](#) (ACE-AP): A facilitated, comprehensive self-assessment and guided, “Plan/Do/Study/Act” improvement process that includes customized resources and coaching.
- [Adolescent Champion Model](#): An evidence-based process that includes the ACE-AP process, on-going technical assistance, and participation in a robust community of practice.
- AHI also offer many **FREE** resources on their website, including: [Sparks](#), [Starter Guides](#), [Youth-Driven Videos](#), [Youth-Friendly Materials](#), [Timely Topics Modules](#), [Recorded Webinars](#),

Let’s Build Together

Children's Medical Services (CMS) is a Child Health program within the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH). Through the Maternal and Child Health Section, the CMS program provides care coordination and other needed medical/health services for children from birth to 21 years of age, who have eligible chronic medical conditions. The CMS program offers statewide community-based services through a network of 18 public health district programs. Each local CMS program has nursing and professional staff who serve in the role of care coordinator. Care coordinators work with families throughout the child/youth’s enrollment to facilitate and coordinate health care services. Health care transition planning is offered for adolescents beginning at age 12. Please contact us at childrens.medical@dph.ga.gov for more information.

Sources

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¹ Blum RW, Beuhring T, Wunderlich M, Resnick MD. Don’t ask, they won’t tell: the quality of adolescent health screening in five practice settings. *Am J Public Health*. 1996;86:1767-72.

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