

New York CAN Children's Health



Fact Sheet

Protecting the health of our children is an important public priority in New York, not only because we value our children, but because preventing illness in childhood improves the odds of a healthy and productive adulthood. Teaching a child to manage a chronic condition avoids countless unneeded visits to the emergency room, as well as lost school days and financial hardships for families.

New York State has long pioneered improvements in preventive health care for children. In the 1890s, New York City Health Commissioner Hermann Biggs used vaccine distribution to eliminate diphtheria. The nation's first mass inoculation against polio took place in New York. New York's public health efforts have reduced the frequency of lead poisoning and teen smoking while prenatal care services have brought down child mortality rates.

Improving the health of children involves a complicated set of policy and financing issues, but New York has historically taken on the hard issues and should be up to developing solutions to a new set of challenges.

Key Facts*

- 180,000 children are eligible but not enrolled in Medicaid.
- Over 15% of adolescents (ages 10-17) are overweight and another 15% are at risk of becoming overweight.
- New York's teen motherhood rate is below the national average, but only 59% of teen mothers receive early prenatal care.
- Children in low-income families are 25% more likely to be diagnosed with cavities and 80% more likely to not receive treatment for these cavities.

What's Needed:

Enroll children in expanded public health insurance and implement measures for administrative simplification and coordination of current programs. Develop universal coverage for parents and young adults so families can be healthy. New York must ensure that all children have access to the medical and dental services they need as well as to services (such as transportation) that allow parents to get their child to care. Children's services must be integrated so mental health, developmental assessments and environmental factors are all considered critical components of children's health. There must also be support for proven public health programs, such as tobacco control, teen pregnancy prevention and obesity prevention programs that keep children healthy.

*For source information, refer to *Growing Up In New York, Charting the Next Generation of Workers, Citizens, and Leaders*. SCAA 2006.