

FactSheet

Health

It is in the best interest of New York State for children to be healthy because they are the future citizens and workforce of our state. Healthy children are able to participate and excel in school. Poor childhood health can diminish the potential for school success.

Major legislation over the past few years has advanced access to insurance. Through expansions in Child Health Plus, thousands who had previously gone without basic medical care such as immunizations and well-child check-ups are now insured. The recently passed federal Health Care Reform bill will provide additional opportunities for children to receive coverage.

While coverage is necessary, it is not sufficient for good health. New York should develop a framework for children's health that recognizes that children's health care needs differ from the needs of adults. Children's health care must be about health promotion and disease prevention. It ought to recognize developmental, behavioral, social and environmental factors in addition to physical health, especially in the first five years of life. Services must allow families to access care easily and receive the assistance they need to keep their children healthy. The framework should also recognize that poor health is far more common in low-income and minority communities.



Key Facts

- ▶ One quarter of the kids under age 18 in New York are obese and one in seven low-income, pre-school aged children is obese. Close to 20% of Hispanic and Black teens are overweight compared to 13% of White youth. Obesity prevalence rates among New York State children aged 2-5 were 21.7% for Hispanics, 15.4% for Blacks and 12.8% for Whites.
- ▶ In a recent survey of children enrolled in Early Head Start and Head Start Programs in New York State, 41% of the children had dental disease and over 70% of these had untreated decay.
- ▶ Children living in households without adequate food have poorer overall health status, a higher likelihood of being hospitalized, lower physical function, and more chronic health conditions than children from families that have more food.

- ▶ Eleven percent of children (0-17 years) in New York State have asthma. Prevalence is highest among non-Hispanic Black children (17.3%), compared to non-Hispanic Whites (8.7%) and Hispanics (11.1%).

We Can Do Better

- ▶ Coordinate children's health priorities across state agencies to build a framework that recognizes the many determinants of disease prevention and health promotion.
- ▶ Data systems should track health outcomes across physical, mental and developmental health indicators.
- ▶ Develop mechanisms to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in child health.
- ▶ Expand access for mental health and dental services in areas where there are shortages.