

Special Health Matters

EPSDT

♥ What is EPSDT?

Medicaid's child health component, known as the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) program, has been shaped to fit the standards of pediatric care and to meet the special physical, emotional, and developmental needs of low-income children.

Federal law – including statutes, regulations, and guidelines – requires that Medicaid cover a very comprehensive set of benefits and services for children, different from adult benefits. Since one in three U.S. children under age six is eligible for Medicaid, EPSDT offers a very important way to ensure that young children receive appropriate health, mental health, and developmental services.

To remember the elements of EPSDT, use the name of the program:

- **Early**---*Identifying problems early, starting at birth*
- **Periodic**---*Checking children's health at periodic, age-appropriate intervals*
- **Screening**---*Doing physical, mental, developmental, dental, hearing, vision, and other screening tests to detect potential problems*
- **Diagnosis**---*Performing diagnostic tests to follow up when a risk is identified*
- **Treatment**---*Treating the problems found.*

♥ What are the EPSDT requirements?

EPSDT is a mandatory set of services and benefits for all individuals under age 21 who are enrolled in Medicaid. Think of it as the child health coverage package of Medicaid.

Screening services "to detect physical and mental conditions must be covered at established, periodic intervals (periodic screens) and whenever a problem is suspected (inter-periodic screens). Screening includes a comprehensive health and developmental history, an unclothed physical exam, appropriate immunizations, laboratory tests, and health education.

In addition, dental, vision, and hearing services are required, including appropriate screening, diagnostic, and treatment. The treatment component of EPSDT is broadly defined. Federal law states that treatment must include any "necessary health care, diagnostic services, treatment, and other measures" that fall within the federal definition of medical assistance (as described in Section 1905(a) of the Social Security Act that are needed to "correct or ameliorate defects and physical and mental illnesses and conditions discovered by the screening services."

All **medically necessary** diagnostic and treatment services within the federal definition of Medicaid medical assistance must be covered, regardless of whether or not such services are otherwise covered under the state Medicaid plan for adults ages 21 and older.

♥ Resources

The selected titles and links below will guide you to some key resources and references.

U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services <http://www.hrsa.gov/epsdt/default.htm> (source)

GWU Center for Health Services Research and Policy

<http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/healthpolicy/chsrp/newsps/>

Origins and Continuing Role of Medicaid and EPSDT

http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/healthpolicy/chsrp/downloads/mil_prep042605.pdf

DHHS Office of the Inspector General

<http://www.oig.hhs.gov/oei/etoh.html>

National Health Law Program (NHeLP)

<http://www.healthlaw.org/>

National Academy for State Health Policy

<http://www.nashp.org/>