

# Public Policy Update

August 3, 2009



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## Home Visitation Program Update

### Home Visitation in House Tri-Committee Health Care Reform Bill!

Before adjourning for summer recess, the House of Representatives took a historic step in reporting health care reform legislation out of its three committees of jurisdiction. The House Tri-Committee bill includes two provisions on home visitation: a Medicaid provision simplifying reimbursement to States for nurse home visitation; and a broader program to provide formula grants to States for home visitation. Following the Congressional recess in August, the Rules Committee is expected to combine the provisions passed by the Ways & Means, Energy & Commerce and Education & Labor Committees into legislation that will be debated on the House floor in September. Inclusion of home visitation provisions in this health care reform legislation is a huge accomplishment that highlights the importance of home visitation to the health and well-being of children and families. We thank all of you, our home visitation colleagues and other supporters for working together to make this happen. The bill and related documents are available at <http://energycommerce.house.gov/>.

More detail on the two provisions is provided below:

- **Medicaid Fix for Nurse Home Visitation**

Section 1713 (pp 768-770), Optional Coverage of Nurse Home Visitation Services, will simplify existing Medicaid coverage of nurse home visitation services by providing States with the option of covering nurse home visitation services under a distinct service category called "nurse home visitation." This clarification will allow States to more easily seek reimbursement for the full range of Medicaid services that our nurses perform. This new service category is limited to proven programs for first-time pregnant women and children under age 2. Section 1713 also has a rule of construction that preserves all existing reimbursement strategies for nurse home visitation, so that States may choose to continue seeking Medicaid reimbursement for NFP through, for example, Targeted Case Management or Administrative Case Management, if they prefer. This new provision will allow reimbursement of a larger percentage (estimated 60-75%) of the services our nurses perform than is currently available.

- **ACF Grant Program**

Section 1904 (pp 838-852), Grants to States for Quality Home Visitation Programs for Families with Young Children and Families Expecting Children, is the same as the earlier Section 1704, which incorporated most of the Early Support for Families Act (HR 2667), introduced earlier by Representatives McDermott (D-WA), Davis (D-Ill) and Platts (R-PA). This section creates a State formula grant program in the Administration for Children & Families, with two tiers of funded programs. The top tier is for programs supported by the strongest evidence, not defined, and receives 40% of grant funds initially, growing to 60% of grant funds after 5 years. Total funding is reduced from the President's proposal, which initially proposed \$1.9B over the first 5 years, with an additional \$6.7B proposed for the second 5 years. The House Tri-Committee bill proposes \$750M over 5 years, with \$50M proposed for FY 2010, \$100M for FY 2011, \$150M for FY 2012, \$200M for FY 2013, and \$250M for FY 2014.

### Senate Finance Committee

The Senate Finance Committee is not expected to complete a mark-up of health care reform legislation prior to the Senate adjourning for recess on August 7<sup>th</sup>. A bipartisan group of Finance Members is expected to continue negotiations this week and throughout the August recess. At

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this point, we remain hopeful that funding for the home visitation program and simplification of Medicaid reimbursement for nurse home visitation will be included in the Senate legislation.

### FY2010 LHHS Appropriations Bill

- The House passed its FY2010 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill that includes \$15 million for the ACF competitive grant program, a \$1.5 million increase from FY 2009. The House Appropriations Committee included report language that retains the same high evidentiary standard as previous appropriations legislation: "As in fiscal year 2009, the Committee directs ACF to ensure that these funds support models that have been shown in well-designed, randomized controlled trials to produce sizeable, sustained effects on important child and family outcomes, such as abuse and neglect. The budget includes a legislative proposal to establish a capped entitlement program to provide a dedicated funding stream to States to establish and expand evidenced-based home visitation programs. The Committee strongly supports home visitation programs and, pending enactment of this legislation, continues to fund the establishment and expansion of programs within this account." House Appropriations Labor-HHS-Education Committee report is available at [http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111\\_cong\\_reports&docid=f:hr220.111.pdf](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111_cong_reports&docid=f:hr220.111.pdf).
- The Senate Appropriations Committee marked-up its FY 2010 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill last week. The Senate is expected to vote on this spending bill prior to adjourning for the Congressional recess. The Committee report included the following language: "The Committee recommendation includes \$13,500,000 within child abuse discretionary activities for the third year of the home visitation initiative. This is the same as the comparable level for fiscal year 2009 and the administration request. This program provides competitive grants to States to encourage investment of existing funding streams into evidence-based home visitation models. The Committee continues to direct the Administration for Children and Families [ACF] to ensure that States use the funds to support models that have been shown, in well-designed randomized controlled trials, to produce sizable, sustained effects on important child outcomes such as abuse and neglect."
- The House and Senate are expected to begin Conference Committee negotiations in September that will determine the final dollar amount for the ACF discretionary grant program.

### August Recess

- August recess is an opportunity to educate your Congressional representatives about the Nurse-Family Partnership, invite them on site and/or home visits where possible, thank them for their support and urge them to continue supporting home visitation as an important part of health care reform! Template invitations and other support are available through your Program Developer and provided in the August Action Alert.