

2011

Kids' Health Annual "Check-Up"



Children's Hospital Colorado

Each year, Children's Hospital Colorado works to positively influence public policy decisions related to children's health and well-being. Now that the 2011 state legislative session has ended, it's time for a "check up" on how children's issues fared this session. There were many issues related to children that the legislature considered and that Children's Colorado engaged on. Here are some of the highlights:

Children's Hospital Colorado's Grassroots Advocates

"A Clean Bill of Health"



- In 2011 to date, members of Children's Hospital Colorado's Grassroots Advocacy Network made over 3,900 contacts to legislators on bills related to children's health and safety! Thanks to each and every one of you who took the time to be a voice for kids!

Keeping Kids Safe and Healthy

"A Healthy Outlook"



- Research is showing more clearly than ever that developing brains need time to heal properly after a head injury. That's why Children's Colorado worked hard to pass a new sports concussion law that ensures coaches of all middle and high schools, parks and recreation teams, and club sports receive basic education in how to spot a concussion. The bill also requires that all kids who may have a concussion are pulled from play, and that young athletes who sustain a concussion get permission from a licensed medical provider before returning to practice or play.
- The legislature banned the use of electronic cigarettes by minors or on school grounds, in the same way that tobacco products are currently banned. Children's Colorado supported this bill as a way to protect kids' health. Electronic cigarettes are battery operated devices that look very much like real cigarettes but deliver vaporized nicotine for the user to inhale.
- Children's Colorado helped successfully defeat legislation that would allow Colorado teens as young as 14 years of age to drive on public roads, including highways. The bill included no restrictions on vehicle size or weight, or on the length of the trip. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for Colorado teens, and, per mile traveled, teen drivers have the highest crash risk of any age group.
- Children's Colorado also opposed and helped defeat legislation which would have eliminated the state sales tax on the purchase of soft drinks. At a time when the state was working hard to balance the more than \$1 billion shortfall to the budget, this legislation would have made the state's deficit worse. The passage of this legislation would have created an additional shortfall of more than \$12 million per year, forcing even deeper cuts to core services like education and healthcare.

"Follow-Up Visit Recommended"

- Comprehensive child wellness/nutrition efforts will continue to be priorities in 2012.



Enhancing Access to Quality Health Care for Children & Families

“A Healthy Outlook”



- Families will have more options to purchase insurance for their children, regardless of medical history or current health status, thanks to passage of a bill that creates open-enrollment periods for child-only health plans. This measure, which was supported by healthcare and consumer advocates as well as insurance providers, will create a fairer insurance marketplace that will allow insurers to do more business, and more kids to have coverage, across Colorado.
- The legislature standardized Medicaid eligibility levels for all children under the age of 18. By moving some kids from CHP+ to Medicaid, this common-sense bill will make government more efficient and at the same time reduce bureaucratic hurdles for families seeking healthcare for their children. Especially for families with more than one child, this new law will make it easier to renew coverage and get access to care.
- A bipartisan group of legislators came together to set up a state-specific health benefit exchange, tailored to Colorado’s unique healthcare needs. The exchange will function as a virtual marketplace for both individuals and small businesses looking to compare prices and benefits before they purchase health insurance. Parents will find it faster and easier to choose the best and most affordable health insurance for their children.
- School Based Health Centers (SBHCs) may now opt to waive co-payments from children insured through the Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+), which will encourage more kids to access care in a school setting. Missing less school to get a checkup is good for kids, not to mention more convenient for parents.
- Legislation passed which gives hospital workers the same protections as other frontline caregivers when exposed to violence during the course of providing care. Current law imposes additional penalties if a person is convicted of third degree assault and the victim is a peace officer, emergency medical technician, or firefighter. This measure adds hospital workers to the category of victims that trigger the enhanced Colorado sentencing.

“Follow-Up Visit Recommended”



- Children’s Colorado actively opposed Senate Bill 213, a measure that would have made CHP+ more expensive for low-income families by imposing monthly premiums. Studies from other states show that the cost of monthly premiums is a significant financial hardship and a real barrier to keeping kids enrolled in public plans. Despite Children’s Colorado’s efforts, this bill passed through the legislature, but we and many other groups were successful in encouraging Governor Hickenlooper to veto the bill and prevent it from becoming law.

“Showing Signs of Improvement”



- Although there is still work to be done in the realm of expanding access to quality healthcare for children, we are encouraged by the strides made in the 2011 legislative session. Children’s Hospital Colorado is committed to continuing our work with community partners, as well as Governor Hickenlooper and the Colorado General Assembly, to identify opportunities to improve quality, enhance eligibility for and enrollment in health coverage plans, and strengthen Colorado’s health care provider network.

Children’s Hospital Colorado Grassroots Advocacy Network



The mission of Children’s Hospital Colorado is to improve the health of children through the provision of high-quality, coordinated programs of patient care, education, research, and advocacy.

What is Advocacy? Advocacy means to support or defend a cause, or to plead on another’s behalf. Children’s Colorado uses three distinct strategies to advocate effectively for kids: **Grassroots Advocacy** – mobilizing people who care about kids’ health to influence policy issues that concern them, **Raising Public Awareness** – educating the general public about pediatric health care issues through the media and other communication channels, and **Direct Lobbying** – talking with policymakers personally about issues that affect kids’ health and acting as an information resource.

For more information on how you can get involved in advocacy efforts on behalf of children, visit:
www.ChildrensColorado.org/advocacy
or email advocacy@childrenscolorado.org.

