



NC Pediatric Society to Develop a Health Plan for Children in Foster Care in North Carolina

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Steve Shore, Executive Director, North Carolina Pediatric Society

The NC Pediatric Society has been awarded an 11-month planning grant to develop a federally-required state plan for the ongoing oversight and coordination of health care services for children and youth in foster care. Children in foster care are considered to have special health care needs and they experience toxic stress. Coordination and sharing of medical and other information is critical because they can experience multiple residential arrangements involving removal and placement, sometimes in rapid succession.

The *Fostering Well-Being Project* is funded by the North Carolina Division of Social Services in the state Department of Health and Human Services. The work builds on the Pediatric Society's efforts to pilot local strategies and build state level support and capacity for improving health care to children and youth in foster care. The key objective is to connect children in foster care to a medical home with the capacity to meet their needs.

“The federal Fostering Connections Act of 2008 directs states to develop plans for the ongoing oversight and coordination of health care services for children in foster care and we're pleased to partner with the Pediatric Society to do that” said Kevin Kelley, section chief of child welfare services with the Division of Social Services.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has developed Standards of Care for children and youth in foster care including recommendations that they be seen early and often and that they are screened regularly for certain conditions. The standards can be found online at Healthy Foster Care America (<http://www2.aap.org/fostercare/>). They emphasize the importance of social behavioral health while taking into account the traumatic nature of removal and placement into foster care.

Marian Earls, MD, past president of the NC Pediatric Society and Pediatric Medical Director at Community Care of North Carolina noted that “the Pediatric Society has long been concerned about the special health care needs of children and youth in foster care. We are pleased that this serious health matter is getting the traction it deserves at both a state level and through local pilot projects across our state.”

In September 2012, the NCPS launched a pilot project at Wilmington Health Associates by placing a Foster Care Coordinator in a pediatric practice setting. The Coordinator’s role is to focus on the health care and other needs of children in foster care with all agencies in New Hanover County that have some responsibility for assisting the patient and their family.

A plan, called the Health Oversight and Coordination Plan - or HOCP, will be developed using the expertise of a leadership team and advisory group with experience in foster care services. The goal is to create a coordinated action plan for identifying and responding to the needs of children in foster care including primary health, behavioral and mental health, oral health and the oversight of prescription medicines. There are approximately 9,000 children and youth in care in North Carolina on any given day.

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