



QUICK INFORMATION ABOUT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Foster Care Children and Youth

November 2012

Issue

Children and youth in foster care have high rates of acute and chronic medical, mental health and developmental problems, making it vitally important that they receive high-quality, coordinated health care.

- ▶ Approximate 80 percent of children in foster care have a chronic medical condition and 25 percent have three or more chronic problems.
- ▶ The most common chronic conditions are growth failure, asthma, anemia and neurological problems. About 60 percent of foster care children in preschool have developmental delays.
- ▶ Children in foster care use mental health services, both inpatient and outpatient, at a rate 15-20 times higher than the general pediatric population.

Moreover, children and youth in foster care are an inherently transient population, often moving from one placement to another. This all too frequently leads to disjointed and generally insufficient health care.

While the federal government must still clarify some provisions that relate to foster care, New York must think about how to incorporate coverage and care for this population into implementation of the ACA.

What the ACA does

- ▶ Starting January 1, 2014, foster care youth who have aged out of the system receive Medicaid coverage until age 26, regardless of income. Youth must have been in foster care at 18 and enrolled in Medicaid.
- ▶ Other ACA provisions, such as health homes for chronic conditions, maternal infant and early childhood home visiting, can improve the health of foster care children and youth.

Steps New York can take

- ▶ Develop mechanisms to keep foster youth enrolled in Medicaid when they transition out of care. Ensure that youth who opt-out can re-enroll if they change their minds.
- ▶ Examine whether the adult Medicaid or children's Medicaid benefits, that include EPSDT, would best meet the health and mental health needs of this population.
- ▶ Specifically identify how foster care children and youth can benefit from the programs being implemented under the ACA.