

**Optimizing Children's Health Services in Connecticut**  
*Survey of Connecticut Parents' Experiences with Child Health Services*  
*Offer Insights for State Policymakers*

Recent findings from the [Connecticut Health Care Survey](#) point to a child health system that provides excellent access to children's health services, and opportunities to improve care and care delivery. The survey solicited views through telephone interviews from more than 5,400 Connecticut residents on their health and health care. More than 800 parents who were surveyed reported on their experiences using health services for their children. Six health foundations funded the telephone survey in a collaborative effort to assess implementation of the Affordable Care Act in Connecticut.<sup>1</sup>

**According to parent responses, Connecticut's child health services are meeting families' needs:**

- Parents report that their children are healthy (98%), have health insurance (98%) and can access the care they need (96%).
- Unmet needs among children appear lower than those observed among adults. Only 6% of parents reported that they postponed getting needed health services for their children in the prior year. For adults, 28% postponed care, mostly for financial reasons.

Connecticut's commitment to child health services, through Medicaid expansion, support for comprehensive primary care in the Person-Centered Medical Home model, and expanded preventive dental care services has paid off in parent reports of access.

**Despite this progress, the survey responses highlighted some important opportunities for improvement. Parents reported the following concerns:**

- lack of communication between primary care providers and specialists
- health providers do not address all of the issues that may make it hard for families to take care of their child's health (such as transportation and managing medications)
- not receiving counseling in areas related to nutrition, exercise and screen time, yet 34% of children were reported by their parents to be overweight or obese

The concerns suggest that child health care providers in Connecticut can do more to coordinate care, promote prevention and support families in partnering to achieve optimal health outcomes. These services are critical to ensuring children's health and are central components of the "medical home" model of care. The term "medical home" was originally coined by the American Academy of Pediatrics and refers to care that is accessible, comprehensive, patient-centered, culturally competent, compassionate and provided with continuity.

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<sup>1</sup> The six foundations were: Aetna Foundation, Children's Fund of CT, CT Health Foundation, Donaghue Medical Research Foundation, Foundation for Community Health and Universal Health Care Foundation of CT

In 2012, Connecticut became the first state to implement a statewide medical home system through Medicaid. Since then, more than 200 pediatricians have received NCQA Medical Home recognition and many more are incorporating aspects of medical home into their practices.

In the survey policy brief "[Children's Experiences with Health Services: Results from the Connecticut Health Care Survey](#)," author Lisa Honigfeld, summarizes the findings and highlights areas of **opportunity for policymakers to continue their efforts to strengthen and expand medical homes for children**. She calls on the State to continue to provide incentives and support to practices to implement medical home components, particularly care coordination. Through our [EPIC](#) training program, CHDI has helped many pediatric primary care practices in Connecticut improve their quality of care and expand their scope of services.

The Affordable Care Act recognizes the contribution of primary care to improving health, experiences with care and to controlling health care expenses. We have come a long way in Connecticut in implementing medical home. The Connecticut Health Care Survey results can help us to target our efforts to ensure that all children have access to affordable, coordinated and family-centered health care.

*For more information or to arrange for an [EPIC](#) training in your practice, visit [www.chdi.org](http://www.chdi.org) or contact Lisa Honigfeld, Vice President for Health Initiatives, 860-679-1523, [honigfeld@uchc.edu](mailto:honigfeld@uchc.edu).*