

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Department of Health Care Finance



Office of the Senior Deputy Director/Medicaid Director

Transmittal # 16-17

TO: DC Medicaid EPSDT/HealthCheck Providers

FROM: Claudia Schlosberg, J.D. 
Senior Deputy Director and State Medicaid Director

DATE: May 24, 2016

SUBJECT: **National Children's Mental Health Awareness Week and Mental Health Screening in Pediatric Primary Care**

All Medicaid-eligible children should receive the comprehensive child health benefit for individuals under the age of 21 known as the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) services benefit. In the District, EPSDT is often referred to as “HealthCheck.” The Department of Health Care Finance (DHCF) is the District agency responsible for administering the Medicaid program, including the EPSDT/ HealthCheck benefit. The EPSDT benefit requires periodic and interperiodic well-child visits, which should be done in accordance with the DC HealthCheck Periodicity Schedule (available at <http://dchealthcheck.net/resources/healthcheck/periodicity.html>). These well-child visits should include a mental health screen.

In recognition of Mental Health Awareness month and National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week, the purpose of this transmittal is to inform EPSDT providers about the importance of mental health screening in the primary care setting, and other resources available in the District.

Mental Health Screening in Primary Care

National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week, observed on May 4th – 10th, seeks to raise awareness about the importance of children’s mental health and to show that positive mental health is essential to a child’s healthy development from birth. It is estimated that at least 1 in 5 children have a mental health disorder and recent studies suggest that early identification is

essential for providing adequate treatment.¹ To facilitate early identification, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that pediatric primary care providers perform mental health screenings during a well-child visit. Additionally, a maternal depression screening can be considered an integral part of a risk assessment for the child that could also facilitate early identification. There are several validated screening tools for children and for maternal depression which are simple to administer and can help identify potential issues.² Pediatric primary care providers serve as the first line of defense for children and families with mental health concerns. In the United States, it is estimated that 13% of school-aged children, and 10% of preschool-aged children, have parents who are concerned about the mental health of their children.³

To facilitate and encourage pediatric primary care providers to perform mental health screens during a well-child visit, DHCF issued new billing guidance in Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 that included a rate increase for components of a well-child visit, including mental health screens. The new billing instructions require providers to include separate procedure codes for billable components/screenings performed when billing for a well-child visit, such as a mental health screen. When a mental health screen is performed during a well-child visit, providers should use procedure code 96127 along with the well-child visit procedure codes (preventive medicine visit CPT codes 99381-99385 and 99391-99395).

Provider Resources

Pediatricians often find it hard to include mental health screening into busy practice workflows, and address each patient's needs. **DC MAP** (Mental Health Access in Pediatrics) and the DC Collaborative for Mental Health in Pediatric Primary Care (DC Collaborative) are resources pediatric primary care providers in the District can use to assist providers to integrate mental health screening into their practice. The DC Collaborative led a 15-month Quality Improvement Learning Collaborative for pediatric practices in 2014-2015 to offer education and technical assistance (TA) to providers to implement the use of mental health screening tools during well-child visits. The DC Collaborative provided training and guidance on proper billing for mental health screens to receive reimbursement for screens. Over the course of the Learning Collaborative, the number of developmental/ behavioral health screens billed to DC Medicaid increased from 4,632 in FY13 to 20,728 in FY15.

Although the Learning Collaborative has ended, DC MAP, a child mental health access program similar to highly successful programs that exist in over 30 other states, is continuing to provide TA and consultative support to pediatric practices interested in better identifying and addressing mental health issues. DC MAP provides FREE services to all pediatric practices in the District, including telephone consultation with child mental health experts (within 30 minutes), community resource referrals, and mental health training and support. The DC MAP team is

¹ "Identification of Developmental-Behavioral Problems in Primary Care: A Systematic Review." R. Christopher Sheldrick, Shela Merchant, Ellen C. Perrin. *Pediatrics*. Aug 2011, 128 (2) 356-363; DOI: 10.1542/peds.2010-3261. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21727101>

² *Maternal Depression Screening and Treatment: A Critical Role for Medicaid in the Care of Mothers and Children*. Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services, CMS, May 2016. <https://www.medicaid.gov/federal-policy-guidance/downloads/cib051116.pdf>

³ Jane Meschan Foy, for the American Academy of Pediatrics Task Force on Mental Health Pediatrics Jun 2010, 125 (Supplement 3) S69-S74; DOI: 10.1542/peds.2010-0788C

staffed jointly by mental health providers (psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and care coordinators) from Children's National Health System and MedStar Georgetown University Hospital. When calling DC MAP, providers will first speak with the care coordinator, who will gather some preliminary information (e.g., provider information, child demographic information, nature of the call). The care coordinator will then determine which DC MAP team member may be most appropriate for the call. For example, if a provider calls with a question regarding mental health resources, then the care coordinator can answer the provider's question. DC MAP also serves as a resource for providers to use when a mental health screen identifies potential areas of concern that require follow-up. To learn more, visit www.dcmmap.org or call DC MAP, Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm at 1-844-DC MAP (1-844-303-2627).

A **Child & Adolescent Mental Health Resource Guide** is also available for use by pediatric primary care providers in the District. This guide aims to provide a comprehensive listing of community behavioral health resources for children and adolescents in the District of Columbia. Please visit <http://www.dchealthcheck.net/resources/healthcheck/mental-health-guide.html> to access the guide.

For more information regarding the requirements for age-specific well-child visits, refer to the DC HealthCheck Periodicity Schedule available at www.dchealthcheck.net.

Contact DHCF

If you have any questions about children's mental health screening in pediatric primary care, please contact Colleen Sonosky, Associate Director, Division of Children's Health Services. Ms. Sonosky can be reached at 202-442-5913 or by email at colleen.sonosky@dc.gov.