

New child health data show state-to-state differences in quality of care

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A new government survey reveals children with special health care needs, such as autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and asthma, don't consistently get the care that is federally recommended and that there are vast state-to-state differences. This is the first time standardized data at the national and state level has been available to the media and families in an easily accessible way.

"Parents of children with special health care needs often have obstacles in getting the information they need," said Christina Bethell, Ph.D., director of the Data Resource Center and associate professor of pediatrics in the Oregon Health & Science University School of Medicine. "The Maternal and Child Health Bureau, which designed and sponsored this survey, is committed to making this data available to the public, parents and media through the Data Resource Center, where you can find specific information about how your state fares in an easy-to-use Web site."

The survey is especially significant because it finds that more than 10 million American children have a special health care need -- that amounts to one in five households with children younger than 18. While states perform well in specific areas, no state is providing all of the recommended care to the majority of their children with special health care needs.

These differences found between states are cause for concern. For instance, in Kansas, just 28 percent of children younger than 12 with special health needs receive care that meets all five of the performance measures recommended by the federal government. By contrast, in Montana, only 13 percent of children with special health care needs meet all five of these measures. For adolescents, the best-performing state was New Hampshire and the worst was Mississippi.

In addition to state-by-state comparisons, the Data

Resource Center Web site housed at OHSU allows media and families to search by other factors such as income or race/ethnicity. The public and others are encouraged to take advantage of the federally funded Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health Web site at www.childhealthdata.org.

Source: Oregon Health & Science University

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