

POLICY & PRACTICE

Nursery Product Injuries Rise

Nursery products such as cribs, high chairs, and walkers were involved in 66,400 injuries to children under age 5 years who were treated in emergency departments in 2006, an 8% increase over 2005, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) said. Infant carriers, car seats, cribs, crib mattresses, strollers, and baby carriages were associated with the most injuries. Falls were the leading cause of injury, and the head was the most frequently injured body part, the CPSC said. In addition, during 2002-2004, CPSC staff received reports of 241 deaths (an average of 80 per year) associated with nursery products among children in the same age group. Cribs, baby baths, bath seats, and playpens were associated with most of the deaths. The products themselves weren't necessarily to blame for the injuries and deaths, according to the report: "It is important to note that many of the incidents were associated with a nursery product but not necessarily caused by the product."

Care Continuity Improves Screening

Complete continuity of care in infancy—seeing the same physician or provider for every visit—dramatically improved the likelihood that children received critical health screenings during their first 2 years, researchers reported in *Pediatrics*. The investigators looked at Medicaid-enrolled infants and found that for total ambulatory visits, children who had complete continuity of care were more than twice as likely to receive lead screening, compared with children who saw a different practitioner for every visit. In addition, children with complete continuity were 1.5-2 times more likely to have been screened for tuberculosis. Continuity also showed a lesser but still significant effect on anemia screening. It was critical for the infants to see the same practitioner at every visit, not just at well-child care visits, the researchers said. "Continuity of care is an important part of ensuring adequate preventive service delivery to a vulnerable population," they concluded.

Head Start Warns of Cuts

The National Head Start Association (NHSA) has warned that the Bush administration is using a series of enrollment cuts and new regulatory requirements in an attempt to dismantle the Head Start program. The administration's proposed 2009 budget—which will require congressional approval—would slice more than 14,065 Head Start child slots, according to the White House. That makes it the first enrollment reduction to be included in a president's formal budget proposal since the program's launch in 1965, the NHSA said. In addition, cuts of more than \$10 million in 2008 funding left many Head Start programs underfunded, the NHSA said. California, Texas, New York, Illinois, Ohio, and Florida stand to lose the most slots for Head Start enrollment, the group said.

Senators Promote Dental Care Bill

Three U.S. lawmakers have introduced legislation designed to increase access to dental care among poor children in an effort to prevent more children from dying because of complications from an untreated tooth

ache. The bill from Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), Sen. Thad Cochran (R-Miss.), and Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) would provide grants to community health centers to expand dental services; provide tax credits for dentists who treat Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and uninsured patients; and create a new allied dental health professional pilot program. The legislation also would direct the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to launch a public education campaign on children's dental health, and would provide grants to train dentists, hygienists, and den-

tal students in pediatric dentistry. In February 2007, 12-year-old Maryland resident Deamonte Driver, who was homeless, died when an untreated tooth infection spread to his brain. "There is no excuse for Deamonte Driver's death, and the fault lies with every single one of us for letting this child slip through the cracks," said Rep. Cummings in a statement.

Abuse of Children on the Rise

Children accounted for more than half of all abuse cases treated at U.S. hospitals in 2005, according to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). About one-third of those children suffered from

neglect, physical and psychological abuse, or physical battery such as shaken child syndrome, the agency said in its most recent News and Numbers release. The number of violence-related hospitalizations among both adults and children increased by 24,000 between 2002 and 2005, and about 4% of these patients were victims of sexual or other abuse, AHRQ said. Roughly 66% of all patients admitted to the hospital because of violence had attempted suicide or injured themselves on purpose and about 31% were victims of attempted murder, fights, rape, or other assaults.

—Jane Anderson

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